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COSPLAY CULTURE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERACTIVE AND LIVING ART THROUGH PLAY

by

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BDes, Fashion Communications,

Ryerson University, Canada, 2006

A Major Research Paper

presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Program of

Fashion

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2012

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Author's Declaration

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COSPLAY CULTURE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERACTIVE AND LIVING ART THROUGH PLAY

Ashley Lotecki
Master of Arts, 2012
Fashion
Ryerson University

Abstract

"Cosplay" (from *kosupure*, which combines the Japanese words for "costume" –コス – and "play" – プレ), is a term used to describe costume fandom, where individuals are costumed as fictional characters. The aim of this research was to develop a deeper understanding of North American cosplayers. Mixed methodology was used to collect and analyze demographic, behavioural, and creative data. In stage one, information was collected from 529 cosplayers in an online survey. In stage two, on-site ethnography was used to observe and gather data. In stage three, seven cosplayers participated in self-directed recording of their creation processes. This study has developed original demographic data on North American cosplayers. It has also explored the creative, emotional, social, and behavioural processes in which cosplayers participate while interpreting and constructing their characters, including the negotiation between fiction and reality, and the place of temporary identity.

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Lastly, a huge thank you goes out to the cosplayers that contributed to my study. Your willingness to participate and go above and beyond what I asked of you was instrumental to the success of this research.

Dedication

To my parents, who encouraged make-believe and dress-up from an early age.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Cosplay, a shortened form of *kosupure*, is a combination of the Japanese words "costume" (コス) and "play" (プレ) (Winge, 2006, p. 67). Cosplay is the modern word used to describe costume fandom, "fandom" being defined as "the realm of avid enthusiasts" (*Fandom*, n.d.). Cosplay is a type of performance art in which an individual is costumed as a fictional character, typically from graphic novels, comics, anime/cartoons, video games, or science fiction/fantasy media.

The term cosplay (*kosupure*) is reported to have been created in 1984 by Takahashi Nobuyuki, founder/writer of Studio Hard publishing company, to describe the fans of science fiction and fantasy he saw at World Con Los Angeles that year who were wearing costumes of their favorite characters (Winge, 2006, p. 66). He was so impressed by what he had seen that, upon returning to Japan, he wrote about his experiences and encouraged his magazine readers to use costumes in the same way (Cozens, 2009). The now widespread use of the word "cosplay" to describe modern costume fandom has contributed to incorrect beliefs surrounding the activity, such as that it originally began in Japan, that it first occurred in the 1980s, and that is limited only to anime/manga themes.

In fact, science fiction and fantasy fans in North America have been participating in costume fandom from as far back as the first World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon), held in New York City from July 2 to 4, 1939 (Pollak, 2006, p. 2). The

approximately 200 attendees (Madle, 1994, p. 51) included science-fiction fandom legends Forrest J. Ackerman and Myrtle Rebecca Douglas, who wore homemade costumes that Douglas had created (Ackerman, 1965, p. 2) (Figure 1). Inspired by the 1933 film *Things to Come* and the artwork of pulp illustrator Frank R. Paul, Ackerman was dressed as a futuristic time traveller (Ackerman, 1994, p. 4; Corliss, 2008), and Douglas wore a gown modelled after costumes in the film (Madle, 1994, p. 51). They

Figure 1. Forrest J. Ackerman & Myrtle Rebecca Douglas at the World Science Fiction Convention in 1939. From *I Remember Morojo* by F.J. Ackerman, 1965.

made such an impression that the next year, Worldcon instituted its annual masquerade ball, which has seen continually increasing numbers of attendees and costumed participants. Even celebrity guests were inspired to join the activities: at Worldcon 1941 (Denvention), famous writer Robert A. Heinlein competed as "Adam Stink, the world's most life-like robot," a parody of the robotic character from popular series *Adam Link* (Rosenblum, 1941, p. 2; Patterson, 2010, p. 279). Today, Ackerman and Douglas are believed to have been the very first participants in science fiction costume fandom (Rogow, 1991, p. 69; Koerth-Baker, 2008, p. B.1; Cameron, 2009, 4), and their actions are generally agreed to have provided the basis for the costume balls and masquerades that continue to be extremely popular at conventions (Madle, 1994, p. 51).

The number and geographical spread of cosplay at fandom-based events is one of the most obvious indicators of how vastly popular it is. However, most cosplay research (Taylor, 2005; Chen, 2007; Napier, 2007; Chen, 2011) deals almost exclusively with anime and manga cosplay, which are only two genres within the larger scope of cosplay. Limited research to date on the demographics and movements surrounding cosplay in general reflect its current lack of importance and legitimacy in the academic world. The shortage of scholarly literature on the subject has contributed to wide-spread misconceptions about cosplay and the culture surrounding it (Lewis, 1992, p. 1). Studies on media environments have shown that demographic groups not represented in median and literature gradually become invisible as they are not available in what Price and Tewksbury (1997) call our “knowledge store” – the mental shortcuts we have that connect social objects with memory and importance (as cited in Williams et al., 2009, p. 819). A lack of representation may be perceived by individuals

within such groups as indicators of their lack of importance or power in society (Williams et al., 2009, p. 820). Without this recognition, a worldwide community of cosplayers, their fans, and the artistic creations of these individuals are inadequately represented and possibly stigmatized, as will be described in Chapter Two.

This research analyzes cosplay from a North American standpoint, one largely overlooked in cosplay studies which generally focus on Asian culture (Chen, 2007; Wang, 2010; Rahman et al., 2012). It investigates ways that North American cosplayers take inspiration from two-dimensional or flat work to construct three-dimensional, living, interactive artwork through costume fandom. This study has gathered demographic information about North American cosplayers for the first time, to develop a clearer and more accurate portrayal of the individuals partaking in cosplay culture. This data is included to avoid what Hammer (2011) describes as the risk of “absolutism,” a theory promoting the idea that every cosplayer is the exact same, which in turn might contribute to further marginalization of the community. In addition, demographic data is a critical part of this research as it acknowledges that different variables may result in different manifestations and data findings, allowing comparisons to be made across future replications of similar studies. This will provide information needed for secondary data analyses (p. 261).

This study will attempt to address the lack of viable academic data and scholarly recognition for cosplay. This MRP will explore North American cosplay demographics, analyze cosplay as a cultural movement and design process, and attempt to reduce the many negative stereotypes surrounding this activity (Napier, 2007; Lopes, 2009; Lundy, 2010).

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter presents six of predominant cosplay genres: steampunk, furry, horror, LARP, participatory historical re-enactment, and trekker/trekkie, examines the position of cosplay in society as a participatory culture that facilitates social interaction and community, discusses cosplay as a form of fandom, how cosplayers use temporary identity to negotiate between reality and fiction, and the stereotypes and public perceptions associated with cosplay.

Cosplay Genres

A unique trait of fandom is its constant state of evolution and development (Harris, 1998). This is clearly evident when looking at the growth of cosplay and costume fandom since the 1930s. At the first World Science Fiction convention in 1939, the very first two fan costumes ever worn were strictly science-fiction based, a tradition that would continue for many years (Madle, 1994). Today cosplay encompasses a huge range of costume fandom activities. Individuals may be costumed as fictional characters from graphic novels, comics, anime/cartoons, video games, and science fiction/fantasy media or characters of their own creation. Within this culture, distinct genres have developed, each with its own unique activities, aesthetics, and communities. Insights into prominent movements within cosplay culture will enable a better understanding of cosplay as a whole.

Steampunk is a cosplay genre that is rapidly growing in popularity (Rose, 2010; Shippey, 2011). Steampunk is a movement and community that “draws on the elaborate aesthetics and worldview of 19th -century England” (Guizzo, 2008, p. 52) to create an alternate history, in which steam-driven technology has continued into the present day. In this imagined world, technology still operates at a modern level but retains the Victorian steam-powered aesthetic. The word “steampunk” was first invented in 1970 by author K.W. Jeter in his novel *The Morlock Night* (Shaw, 2011); however, the concept is much older, based on the work of authors such as Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, Mary Shelley and Mark Twain (Allen, 2010, p. 42; *Inspiration*, 2011, p. 16) and supported by more modern works such as *The Difference Machine* (1990) by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling (Wherry, 2003). Guizzo (2008) describes how “diehards” speak and dress as though they were from this world, some even staying in character all the time. The steampunk community has a large online presence which includes discussions of their lifestyles, related literature, and sharing photos of handmade prop weapons and costumes they have crafted (http://brassgoggles.co.uk/, http://www.deviantart.com/, http://www.ottens.co.uk/gatehouse/, http://www.thesteampunkempire.com/). "There is a real focus on sharing, exploring things together, building community" (Gilsdorf, 2010). Fashion takes a lead role, embracing the theatrics and whimsy of Victorian Britain and combining materials and fabrics that highlight contrasts such as nature and technology, leather and lace, delicate fabrics and metal gears (Figure 2). Components are often stained or hammered to look aged or worn (Petrescu, 2010). The “desire to make things is an integral part of the steampunk movement” (Guizzo, 2008, p. 54). Participants

embrace the do-it-yourself movement and value unique, intricate creations over disposable, common ones.

Figure 2. Steampunk cosplayers at Fan Expo Canada 2011 (Toronto). Photo by researcher.

Individuals known as "**Furries**" are fans of anthropomorphic art and fiction. "Furry fandom" developed in the 1980s as a spin-off of science fiction and fantasy conventions (Kratina, 2007), eventually gaining enough popularity that the first furry convention, ConFurence Zero, was held in 1989 in California (Carlson, 2011, p. 196). Many in this community strongly identify with or even view themselves as non-human species of animals (Gerbasi et al., 2008), sometimes adopting animal identities in a variety of environments such as online, in role-playing games, or in real life by wearing a costume (Carlson, 2011, p. 193). The level of costume involvement varies: some individuals are

happy with wearing their “normal” clothing with plush ears and/or a tail (Figure 3); others wear complete fur suits or mascot costumes; and “furry lifestylers” may stay costumed

Figure 3. An example of a Furry cosplay with facial prosthetics. Property of the researcher.

in daily life (Gerbasi et al., 2008). “For some creative furries, the act of making physical costumes is a natural extension, or alternate expression, of drawing anthropomorphic animals” (Benesh-Liu, 2010, p. 48). Furry fandom is one of the most striking but also most stigmatized genres within cosplay, particularly due to negative portrayals in popular media (Fried, 2005; Crow, 2007; Parks, 2008; Malloy, 2009; Anonymous, 2011).

Costume fandom inspired by the horror genre, such as **Zombie** cosplay, has quickly gained global popularity over the past ten years. The fastest growing expression of this genre has been organized public events known as “Zombie Walks,” in which participants costume themselves as reanimated corpses and walk a designated route, usually through the downtown area of a city. In 2003 (Anonymous, 2008, p. 1), the first

ever Zombie Walk was organized by Thea Munster in Toronto, Ontario (Canada) as a way for fans of classic monster lore and the zombie films of George A. Romero to meet (Tobias, 2008) (Figure 4). Now a worldwide phenomenon, attendee numbers for annual events range from a few dozen to thousands (Alamenciak, 2011, p. A1). Estimated participant numbers of note for 2011 events were: Toronto, 7000 (Yuen, 2011); Mexico, 9,860 (*Ghouls*, 2011); Denver, 12,000 (Gentry, 2011); and Brisbane, 12,000 (Howson, 2011). “Participating” generally implies dressing as a zombie. Casual costuming can involve simple makeup or torn clothing, while more hard-core fans dedicate substantial

Figure 4. Zombie Walk creator Thea Munster & husband Adam Invader during their real-life wedding which took place at the Toronto Zombie Walk in 2011. Photo credit: Lara Willis. Posted with permission.

time and money to developing detailed makeup and garments (Hendry, 2010). Makeup artist David Ainsworth has suggested that “[a] good zombie costume will tell the story of how that person turned into a zombie” (Meyer, 2011, p. 3B), such as through faux injuries like bite marks. As well as wearing costumes, participants frequently adopt traits of a chosen zombie type, such as gait, mannerisms, and speech. Some participants prefer to socialize and walk around as their usual selves at these events, but others stay in character the entire time, speaking only in animalistic groans or moaning “Brains.” It is also not uncommon to see other types of monsters or even “Zombie hunters” in military-style costumes in attendance at Zombie Walks. The wide variety of different zombie styles in popular culture and the ability for participants to “zombify” any gender, occupation, or race, allows for endless creative options and appeals to a growing number of people.

A more intensive activity which includes costume fandom is that of **Live Action Role Playing** or LARP, which has been described as “an improvisational theater version of the game Dungeons & Dragons or a similar fantasy computer game” (Percival, 2006, p. S1). LARP events are real-life gatherings organized between a minimum of two players interacting in an unscripted game of role playing guided by a plot and rules (Tychsen et al., 2006, p. 254). Games may take place in a single day, during multiple scheduled events, or over an extended period such as a weekend. Large-scale events can attract over 3,000 players (Todras-Whitehill, 2004, p. F.1.). LARP, as it is defined today, is believed to have started in the 1970s (Quin, 2003, p. 4; Scotland, 2011, p. A.1) or early 1980s (Tychsen et al., 2006, p. 256), inspired by tabletop role-playing games (RPGs) such as Dungeons & Dragons. LARP games are

usually set in a fictional reality, popularly inspired by fantasy, science fiction, and historical re-enactment genres. Participants develop a fictional character, choosing parameters such as race (including fantasy races, such as elves, trolls, vampires, etc.), powers, professions, and personality. Most players play the same character for many years (Percival, 2006, p. S1) but sometimes are assigned a role for a game (Todras-Whitehill, 2004, p. F.1.). Costumes are a customary part of becoming this character, often combined with props or fake weaponry, SFX makeup, and even speaking in ancient tongues (Dick, 2005, p. 24) (Figure 5, 6). “The embodied nature of play, together with the emphasis on props and costume, allows players to have their

Figure 5. LARPers battling during an event. Photo posted with permission.

Figure 6. Example of a LARP group. Photo posted with permission.

characters interact with the game world in extremely varied and detailed ways" (Hitchens et al., 2008, p. 11). Costumes are usually bought, borrowed, or created by LARPers but event organizers may also provide gear for their members (Quin, 2003, p. 4).

Participatory historical re-enactment groups exist in many forms and are inspired by a variety of themes. Unlike LARP, which is typically set in a fictional universe, these groups participate in an accurate living history of a specific time period or historical event (Morris, 2001, p. 196) (Figure 7). In the past, high-concept themes such as medieval knights, Vikings, pirates, pilgrims, and soldiers have been popular; nowadays more humble inspirations are also included, such as the 1984-85 UK miners' strike in Orgreave (Brandl-Risi, 2010, p. 56). In bringing history to life, high importance is placed on authenticity as manifested through costume, speech, actions, environment, and even the recreation of historical discomforts of the re-enacted time. Here bodily discourse is created through animating the past with the physical and psychological

Figure 7. The *Loyal Newport Associators* and other re-enactment units as they preserve the memory of forgotten soldiers in the American War of Independence. Photo posted with permission.

experiences of these events (Agnew, 2004, p. 330). The physical and emotional investments vary with each participant but there are accounts of intense realism: male participants starving themselves to portray more authentic Civil War soldiers, for example; women binding their bodies to appear male (Agnew, 2004, p. 330; Wagner, 2007, p. 39); and Native American re-enactors painting their skin “red” (Jones, 1992, as cited in Gapps, 2009, p. 404). With over 50,000 members (Society for Creative Anachronism, 2008, p. 2), the largest group of this kind is the international Society of Creative Anachronism (SCA) founded in 1966 (Wagner, 2007, p. 14). The SCA is “dedicated to researching and re-creating the arts, skills, and traditions of pre-17th-century Europe” (http://www.sca.org/). Members research and participate in a range of activities such as “combat, archery, equestrian activities, costuming, cooking, metalwork, woodworking, music, dance, calligraphy, fiber arts, and much more” (http://www.sca.org/). Unlike groups such as war re-enactors that recreate specific

events with defined outcomes, the Society's major setting for re-creations is through events and gatherings which can combine one or more activities, such as medieval battles and tournaments that often feature real fighting (Hrenchir, 2004, p. A1), royal courts, medieval feasts, and displays of artistic skills. Events can run in length from one afternoon to a full week but most commonly are one day or weekend (Society for Creative Anachronism, 2008, p. 2). Upon joining the Society, each member takes the name of a person from or inspired by the Middle Ages or the Renaissance (Rolfsen, 1988, p. 1). The *New Member's Guide to the SCA* (2008) states that all attendees at events are expected to wear pre-17th century clothing, and although members usually make their own, it is acceptable to have garb commissioned or borrowed, especially if you are a first-timer (p. 3). As a visual indicator of the time period, characters, and story, clothing is an intrinsic component of all historical re-enactments. Months can be spent researching historical costume and weapons before members make their own, many of them constructed using the skills learned through the SCA (Rondeaux, 2002, p. 3B). Authenticity is described as a "defining feature of the re-enactment process" (Gapps, 2009, p. 398), imbuing participants both with status within the Society and outside (such as with cultural and historical organizations). In all types of historical re-enactment, sloppy costumes and inauthentic behaviour are likely to be negatively criticized (Wagner, 2007, p. 47) and viewed as embarrassing (Donahue, 2008, p. 1).

Over the past few decades the cosplay that has become most recognizable is likely that associated with ***Star Trek* fandom**. Members of this community are known as Trekkies (*Trekkies declared*, 1995), or Trekkers, a title strongly preferred by more hard core fans (Rogow, 1991, p. 350; Daly, 2009). Gene Roddenberry's original *Star Trek* TV

series aired from 1966 to 1969. It gained immense cult popularity during 1970s reruns (Gilbert, 2009) and this was reinforced in 1980s with the next series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (Horne, 2006). The franchise now spans more than 40 years, including six TV series and 11 movies, the most recent released in 2009. The newest film, *Star Trek*, revitalized and reimagined the "universe," appealing to both old and new fans and further enhancing the franchise popularity. Since the 1960s, fans have created and expanded on the lore and mythology surrounding *Star Trek* to the extent that the world has become a complete alternate universe or "reality" (Jindra, 1994). The continually thriving culture has its own fan-made music, literature, philosophies, films, artwork, and conventions (Jenkins, 1997). Trekkies/Trekkers tend to gravitate towards a specific race or time period from *Star Trek* (Barry, 2009). Although participating in costume fandom is not a requirement in this community, cosplay is very popular (Figure 8). Garments and props are often homemade, bought or commissioned (Kurniasari, 2011). Trekkie/Trekkers may costume themselves as specific characters or their own original

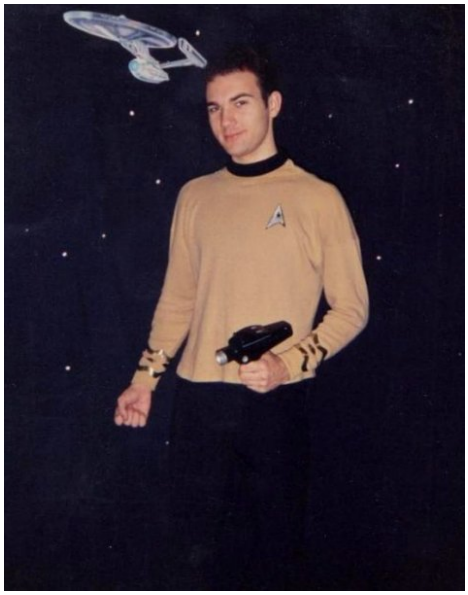


Figure 8. Cosplayer dressed as James T. Kirk from *Star Trek* (TV series, 1966-1969). Photo posted with permission.

creations based on the mythology of the series. Accuracy is valued highly in this community but fans may also try to negotiate between accuracy and their own personal tastes (Jenkins, 1997). To enhance the experience, fans may wield weapons, wear SFX makeup and prosthetics, speak in *Star Trek* originating languages such as Klingon (Karras, 2003, p. B4), or adopt the personality and demeanour of their characters. Clubs and online *Star Trek* communities are a big part of exchanging ideas and tips for costuming as well as sharing other fan creations and discussing the various incarnations of the series (http://www.startrekvoyager.com/, http://www.trekbbs.com/, http://www.startrekmovie.com/, http://www.startrek.com/).

These six examples of cosplay genres are just a few among many that exist. The constantly evolving state of fandom suggests there will surely be even more new genres in the future. It is important to look at the unique relationships cosplayers have with different genres and how fluidly they are able to move between them if they choose.

Play, Participatory Culture and Social Interaction

Modern trends of dwindling community interaction and a fading sense of societal belonging have created gaps that fan cultures are able to fill by providing a space for community and acceptance (Napier, 2006). Abrams describes “dressing up” as an activity that allows individuals to play with a variety of ideas and identities through their own bodies, creating an embodied way of relating to the world. The shared activity is a means of social bonding and has historically contributed to a sense of connectivity and community (1997).

Wagner (2007) explains the meaning of “Edutainment (or education-entertainment)” as the combination of education and entertainment for the purposes of fun and interactive learning. It is argued that edutainment activities such as “living history,” a form of historical re-enactment, are the future of education in North America. Being transported to another place or time through environment, costume, character, sound, and smell, the experience simultaneously combines learning and entertainment for visitors. Visual and physical stimulations are a requirement in modern society; living history allows for an equally tactile and compelling learning environment by bringing history to life. Morris (2001) explains the potential for historical re-enactments and role-playing activities in school education describing them as flexible, able to reflect student interests, and offering opportunities for information synthesizing, learning, and participation. Morris discusses a document published the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) in 1993 that lists five key imperatives for social study teaching: learning must be meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active (p. 200). Participatory activities such as re-enactments and cosplay have the ability to combine all five of these elements – not just for social studies learning but in many areas of education.

Participatory culture has been described by Jenkins (2009) as a culture with “low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship” (p. xi), where knowledge is shared between more and less experienced members. Jenkins discusses role-playing and costume creation as participatory activities which enable the development of skills for problem solving and creative expression in everyday life situations. Jenkins

emphasizes specific skills that are important for new media literacies and identifies both problems and solutions involving the application of play-based techniques. Cosplay has been linked to many of the skills he describes such as: “Play”; “Performance”; “Appropriation”; “Multitasking”; “Collective Intelligence”; and “Networking.” Theory of play as a form of intellectual development and requirement for a healthy society is very applicable to research on cosplay. In the analysis portion of this thesis, it will be important to review the data and compare it to Jenkins’s theories on participatory culture in order to show if cosplay is a valid expression of this culture.

Fandom Studies

Studies of fandom (Lewis, 1992; Sanders, 1994; Gray et al., 2007; Booth, 2010) can provide valuable information and a general framework for academic research into cosplay. In *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, Gray et al. (2007) explain how every one of us is a fan in some regard, whether through following celebrities on the internet, pre-ordering the newest book in a favourite series, or dedicating time to catch the new episode of a favourite TV show. Booth (2010) describes this same idea and goes further to say that this common group helps us to relate to other fans, and therefore suggests that studying fans allows us to study ourselves. Gray et al. (2007) explain how the word “fandom” gives the fans and practices that create fan cultures significance for scholarly researchers. Fandom is so present in our lives that Jenkins (2007) explains that media companies are being run differently today due to the increased visibility of fandom and participatory culture. The economic and cultural impact and influence that “fan cultures” are having on consumer

industries has led some media analysts to describe members of these communities "prosumers." As prosumers, "participants both produce and consume cultural products" (Olin-Scheller, 2010, p. 41). These communities, of which cosplay can be considered a part, are locales where fans bond within larger communities and share knowledge and opinions, pool information, and develop a greater consciousness about their commonalities and similar interests. He believes this is resulting in a new kind of cultural power and consumer influence.

There is a considerable amount of literature that analyzes fan fiction, in which amateur authors borrow characters or settings from existing published works for their stories. Literature on fan fiction reviews its purpose, creation, and the experiences of fan fiction writers (Hellekson & Busse, 2006; Kelts, 2006). Bacon-Smith (1992) describes science fiction fans at conventions using an in-depth ethnographic methodology, and reviews the importance of reflexive procedures. Bacon-Smith also includes a glossary of the language that needed to be learned to be accepted into this fan community, showing the importance of the social structures already in place in fan cultures. These techniques have viable potential to be modified and adopted for cosplay analysis.

Due to the lack of theory based specifically on cosplay, the lens provided by fandom studies will allow further examination and discussion regarding the results of this thesis.

Cosplay Outside of North America

The academic journal *Mechademia* (Vol. 1-6) is the first English-language journal that offers valuable information and insights on Japanese popular culture and fandom practices. Although it mainly deals with anime and manga fan culture in Japan, it includes scholarly articles on various aspects of cosplay, addressing such issues as the conflicting reports on the “creation” and history of cosplay, and different levels of cosplay dedication (2006).

Chen (2007) discusses art and cosplay fan cultures in Taiwan and describes the increasing interest in fan cultures as a research subject for communication studies. Through interviews with fans she gathers compelling information about cosplayers’ personal experiences of character creation. She works with the participants to create a list of questions that determine their personal criteria for evaluating cosplay performance. The process of creation and personal benefits from cosplay activities are summarized by participants into core points. Chen’s research framework was a useful reference when developing interview questions and a data-comparison framework for the current study.

Identity and Performance

The redefinition of physical identity is something deeply engrained in the concept of cosplay. Napier (2007) describes manga and anime cosplay, but goes further into analyzing the identity cosplayers assume. The content analysis of her study is based on the responses of cosplay interviewees. Strate, Jacobson, and Gibson (1996) explain

how two-dimensional and three-dimensional graphics will have increasing significance in light of the growing trend of online and virtual personas.

Judith Butler's research on performative identity can help explain fan identity construction in relation to the practice of cosplay. In *Gender Trouble* (1999), she describes how gender is an unstable identity that is created over time in exterior spaces through stylized repetition. This means that gender is a construct of the acts of a person and not what that person is. The idea of performed identities is also a key characteristic of postmodernism which explains identity as fragmented, flexible, and of many layers (Sturken, 2009). Considering a fluid identity surface such as this can help us understand how cosplayers do not have to overtake their own identity in order to become a fictional character. Instead they are able to intentionally negotiate a temporary identity by acts of repetition such as through dress, posing, and physical actions, and often in a playful way.

Studies on gaming culture show similar exchanges between players and fictional characters/environments. Gee (2003) has named this "projective identity," and describes it as a combination of two meanings: "[T]o project one's values and desires onto the virtual character" and "seeing the virtual character as one's own project in the making […] defined by my aspirations for what I want that character to be and become […]" (p. 55). Players establish their identity as they interact with their avatar and the game but these interactions also change how players relate to the fictional content. This is similar to what happens in cosplay. Individuals identify in many different ways with the characters they choose to depict, allowing the fictional identity to transfer to the cosplayer, which is further reinforced by spectators and the individual themselves. The

reverse of this also occurs as their interpretation of the character's narrative through performance impacts the spectators (and themselves), and adds to what currently exists in the story or myth surrounding the character.

These theories will provide a framework to analyze how cosplayers negotiate between their own identity and the temporary identity of the character they choose to emulate. This is a key part of this research and will provide many insights into how individuals produce reality from imagination.

Stereotypes and Public Perception

The lack of comprehensive academic study on the cosplay community has frequently enabled speculation and stereotypes to be passed off as fact by the media. For decades, fandom in general has had multiple negative associations. Stereotypes used in the first half of the twentieth century are still being repeated even though fandom, and society in general, has drastically changed.

After attending the first World Science Fiction Convention in 1939, science fiction writer Frederick Pohl was quoted as calling fans who attended "toadish" and "loners" (Pollak, 2006, p. 2). In 1965, *The New Yorker* reported on the New York Comicon and those participating in comic fandom. "[W]e were present to learn what we could about the assemblage, made up of adults and adolescents – unhip and outside the pop-culture movement" (Lopes, 2009, p. 95). Media articles have described participants in cosplay as "fat-swaddled nerds who dress like game characters and cartoons for fun" (Seanbaby, 2004, p. 51), and participants in the fandom community as "juvenile, frivolous, or just plain nerdy" (Gilsdorf, 2006, p. C.1.). The same stereotypes are present

in academic sources, including descriptions of individuals as “passionately obsessive, sometimes hysterical” (Lundy, 2010, p. 3); “on the edge of society” (Napier, 2007, p. 56), “cultists” (Lopes, 2009, p. 95), “deranged” (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 124); and given “labels of deviancy” (Lewis, 1992, p. III).

Stereotypes of fandom have not changed for decades, regardless of how false they may now be. Rogow (1991) explains for example that although stereotypes of science fiction fans as predominantly male, young, and technologically savvy were once true, “SF FANS no longer fit the stereotype of a pimply adolescent seeking escape” (p. 107). The history of these stereotypes is not completely clear but Jenson (1992) says negative, pathological concepts about fans can be connected to associations of alienation, vulnerability, and irrationality that are central to twentieth century beliefs about modernity. An intrinsic aspect of this study will be to provide tangible data to show a modern, accurate depiction of participants in cosplay and costume fandom. This will help to reduce stigma and negative stereotype associations, and promote understanding among those who are not in the community.

This chapter has looked at how cosplay is a venue for participation, learning and social interaction in society, what defines fans and fandom, how cosplayers use dress and performance to negotiate temporary identity, and public perceptions and stereotypes. Publication on cosplay has increased substantially over the last decade, indicating a growing interest in it as a subject, but there is still a major lack of scholarly recognition. This research aims to reduce the lack in academia of viable data and scholarly recognition for cosplay. The purpose of this MRP is to explore the scope of North American cosplay demographics, to examine cosplay as a cultural movement and

a medium for artistic expression, and attempt to address the negative societal associations with cosplay activities.

Chapter Three

Methods

The purpose of this study was to gather information and develop an accurate record of the cosplayer population in North America and the creative processes they use in order to create living, interactive art through play. Due to the complexity of cosplay, it was determined that multiple types of data were necessary for this research. The methodology used combined both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. Empirical data on cosplay does not currently exist so the data developed for this study aimed to present a clearer and more accurate portrayal of the individuals participating in cosplay culture.

As North American cosplay is a fan-based community that spans across the whole of a continent, geographic constraints made the combination of research methods necessary. In the survey, data on demographics (quantitative) was gathered alongside responses from open-ended questions dealing with personal feelings and opinions related to cosplay (qualitative). As a study of the culture of cosplayers and their costumed “habitats,” a substantial portion of this research study was also conducted through ethnography. According to O’Reilly (2005), ethnographic methods acknowledge “the complexity of human experience and the need to research it by close and sustained observation of human behaviour” (p. 2). Ethnographic methods such as on-site participant observation and informal interviews were used in order to accurately translate the themes and contexts within the participatory culture.

Multiple stages of data collection were also important for data triangulation; the use of multiple data-gathering techniques to investigate the same phenomenon which allow mutual confirmation of measures and validation of findings (Berg, 2007, p. 6). Data triangulation allowed confirmation and strengthening of findings across all research stages and minimized the possible effect of personal biases.

Research took place in three stages: Stage One – anonymous online survey, Stage Two – on-site ethnographic study, and Stage Three – individual design processes (Creative Component).

Stage One – Online Survey

For Stage One, an online survey was determined to be the most practical method for gathering multiple types of data while addressing the wide geographic proximity of participants as well as limitations imposed by time and funding. An anonymous online survey was developed in order to collect demographic data (e.g., age, gender, location, education, occupation), creative data (e.g., cosplay frequency, cosplay type, level of commitment, costume construction, time and money invested), and behavioural data (e.g., experiences, perceptions, stereotypes, inspirations/reasons) of North American cosplayers.

Demographic questions were mainly closed-ended as they dealt with quantitative data. Questions about creative and behavioural information were closed-ended. Although all questions and specified answers were meticulously planned, it would have been impossible to predict and identify exact responses for every question, so many questions in these categories allowed additional text input under an “Other” response.

The final question of the survey was an optional open-ended question asking for a description of the participant's design process. In this case, using an open-ended question provided the opportunity for the participants to use their own words and voice to express themselves. Participants were given the option of leaving their contact information for the purposes of further participation such as contributing more in-depth information, and to determine if they were appropriate and/or willing candidates for later research stages.

Before releasing the survey to the public, a pilot test was done with a small group of cosplayers. This procedure was employed to confirm there were no technical barriers, and that the language used was not confusing or offensive to potential participants. The average time to complete the survey was also tested to ensure it would be ten minutes or less which Gillham (2007) explains is the tolerable maximum.

Requests for participants were made on social networking websites in online cosplay groups, website forums, email requests through cosplay event and community organizers to their members. Various university program administrators of creative based degrees also emailed the link out to their current student populations. Business cards with a web link to the survey were passed out to cosplayers at cosplay-related events as described below. Participants were also asked to pass along the survey link to friends who would potentially complete the survey. This allowed access to a wide enough population in the cosplay community to apply sampling theory, which is the use of a selection of the population to make estimations about the whole population (Seale, 2004, p. 173). It also allowed for the creation of much needed demographic information.

Once the survey was closed, response data was reviewed, cleaned, and unusable responses were removed. Responses for closed-ended questions were coded and analyzed in order to develop demographic and behavioural data. Content analysis techniques were used to analyze the written responses for the only open-ended question. “Content analysis is designed to produce an objective, measurable, verifiable account of the manifest content of messages” (Fiske, 1990, p. 136). Content analysis was determined to be the best method for analyzing this question due the relative ease it allows for sifting through large amounts of data, the inferences it allows to be made which can later be compared to other data method findings, and its ability to facilitate discovery of the interests and focuses of participants (Stemler, 2001).

Content analysis took place in two steps: 1) the written responses to the open-ended question were compiled and independently reviewed by three separate analysts for the purpose of identifying major themes; 2) the three separate analyses were then compared and interpreted using the common trends and themes that emerged. These findings were later compared to the findings in Stage Two.

Stage Two – On-Site Ethnographic Study

Stage Two was an ethnographic study of cosplayers at fan-based events. The researcher attended events to photograph, film, speak with, and observe many different types of cosplayers, as well as participate as a cosplayer. Events attended were: San Diego Comic Con July 21 to 24, 2011 (San Diego) and Fan Expo Canada August 26 to 28, 2011 (Toronto).This stage of the research was structured through the ethnographic

approach of participant observation, and data was collected through observation, photography, and informal conversations.

During informal conversations, participants were asked about the creative processes undertaken for the cosplay as which they were participating, and their reflections on design and identity were recorded. With the loud and busy nature of conventions such as the ones attended by the researcher, conversations were informal and recorded through field notes and photographs. Informal interviews were imperative in order to create a fluid and comfortable dialogue, and to reduce potential burden on the cosplayers who were willing to share their valuable time with the researcher.

As ethnography requires the researcher to adopt the observer position and act as the primary research instrument (Seale, 2004, p. 228), the researcher learned the "codes" or lingo and gestures to allow acceptance by other attendees and cosplay participants. Kaplan and Maxwell (1994) explain that the goal of qualitative research is to understand a phenomenon from the participant point of view and its specific social and institutional context. Interview subjects are also more willing to agree to participate if they are approached by someone who reflects their own characteristics and those of the interview environment (Iarossi, 2005). In order to facilitate this, the researcher cosplayed at these events whenever possible which furthered the ability to blend in with the audience and inspire more comfortable dialogue. Care was taken, however, to continuously maintain and express their position as a researcher.

Information gathered in Stage Two was later compared with Stage One and was also used to inform the parameters for the creative stage of research (Stage Three).

Creative Component: Stage Three – Individual Design Processes

The creative component of this thesis took the form of an exhibit showcasing the final designs and process work of a selection of Stage Three participants. Photographs of the cosplayers, fully costumed and posing as their personal expressions of their characters, were displayed. A small image of the original two- or three-dimensional cosplay source character (if applicable) was also be on display, enabling the audience to compare and visually explore how the cosplayer created a living character. The final costumes and props were displayed, with information, photos, and quotes describing how the participants created their characters, and their design processes.

In Stage Three, a select group of cosplayers chronicled their own individual design processes of creating a cosplay through self-directed records that combined personal photographs and their own words. Once these records were submitted to the researcher, each cosplayer was given a list of questions that would prompt them to look more deeply at the personal actions and emotions surrounding their work. This stage positioned participants to be reflexive about their process of design by having them record the creative process they undertook when cosplaying, from concept to interactive, living character.

Participants were recruited from individuals who had opted to leave their contact information after completing the online survey in Stage One. A short email questionnaire was distributed to determine willingness to participate, upcoming cosplay events, estimated construction timelines, and interest in the second two research stages. These questions were embedded directly in the email which researchers have shown results in

a significantly higher return rate (Lokman, 2006, p. 1290). The email responses were then reviewed and a smaller group of cosplayers was selected based on the details that had been provided. A second email was sent to this group informing them of potential candidacy. At this time a more detailed explanation about Stage Three was provided to determine if they would be willing and able to fit within the parameters required based on the projects they had recently finished or were currently working on. Based on the results of this screening, seven individuals were selected to take part in this stage. Each expressed interest in sharing their creative and thought processes as well as reflecting on them for the purposes of this research. Before proceeding further, participants were sent a consent form and exhibit form which they reviewed, signed, and returned through email.

Each cosplayer was given a basic framework for the self-directed recording of their creative process and had the opportunity to further discuss any details. Due to time constraints, some of the cosplayers used projects they had already finished within the past two years. After they had finished recording their cosplay, each participant submitted their visual and written records of the process. These records were reviewed by the researcher and, based on initial findings, a list of questions was developed that would encourage each cosplayer to review his or her work in ways their process review had not shown. The questions were designed to provoke personal, open-ended responses, providing further reflection and personal insights for analysis. Due to the deep thought this step encouraged, email interviewing was determined to be the best option. In addition to addressing concerns about time zones and location, this method

allowed participants to take their time in their personal environment which has been proven to facilitate a more relaxed expression of oneself (Lokman, 2006, p. 1290).

The content created for Stage Three showed the emotional, physical and financial processes of how each individual developed and negotiated identity as a cosplayer. It also attempted to show how cosplay is intrinsically linked to the activities of spectatorship and performance. This was a measurement of creation of identity through cosplay, to as tangible a degree of objectivity as one can be expected to produce. The aim of exhibiting this work was to follow ways that cosplayers create living artwork through play, and document how they organize their design processes from beginning to end. This provided many insights into the culture for participants, fans, and curious onlookers. The immense range of skills that cosplayers had taught themselves or learned from others in the community made for an inspiring exhibit, to which people with diverse backgrounds were hopefully able to relate in some way. In showcasing the costumes and design process with photographs of the cosplayers, the emotional and physical investment with which they infused their creations, and how this translated to the idea of play, was communicated to the viewer.

Ethical Considerations

Cosplaying is a human experience and gathering participant opinions and experiences is critical to its understanding; therefore, it was imperative for this research to be conducted with human subjects. Two main ethical concerns were considered in relation to this research.

The first ethical concern related to privacy and consent issues. The researcher was carrying out informal interviews and interacting with human subjects and therefore was required to receive appropriate permissions from participants as was required by the Ryerson Research Ethics Board. The researcher clearly articulated or provided written statements as to what individuals were agreeing to be involved in and what part their contribution would potentially have in the research. In the Stage One survey, each respondent was required to read and acknowledge their understanding of the consent agreement on the opening page by checking off an agreement box. Unless this agreement was clicked, they were unable to access any of the survey questions. At on-site events for Stage Two, a short explanation was given and verbal consent was obtained from any cosplayers who were photographed or informally interviewed by the researcher. Participants who consented to an informal interview were provided an information sheet containing the researcher's contact information and details about the study. A model release was also on hand but only given out if requested by a cosplayer. This was due to the nature of the events attended. As per event rules, individuals filming or photographing attendees on-site were encouraged to practice common courtesy but not required to obtain consent or abide to stipulations of privacy. Participants in Stage Three were required to sign two documents, a consent form and an exhibit release form. These forms provided the option for each person to be identified by their own name or by a pseudonym – and some opted to be identified as the name they used in the cosplay community. They were also reminded that if anonymity was a concern for them, they were responsible for reviewing their written and visual records before submitting them for the study to ensure it would not identify them.

The second concern related to the age of consent. Cosplay encompasses a wide range of ages, so cosplayers under the age of 18 would likely be attending events where on-site research would be taking place. Individuals under the age of 18 would require additional permissions from parents or guardians. In order to control the sample and avoid the issue of parental consent, this research focused on cosplayers over the age of 18. The survey consent form and introductory paragraph in Stage One specified only cosplayers 18 years old or higher qualified to participate. By clicking on the consent box, they confirmed their age was 18 years or older. As Stage Three participants were originally from Stage One, they had already confirmed they were the age of consent. At on-site events for Stage Two, cosplayers were given an explanation of the study and then asked if they met the minimum age requirement. Only cosplayers that met these requirements were photographed or casually interviewed.

Chapter Four

Findings and Analysis

Findings: Stage One

Method

A large-scale online survey was distributed to the North American cosplayer population in order to develop demographic, behavioural, and creative data.

Sample

A total of 529 usable respondent surveys were analyzed for this data stage. Surveys were completed by individuals who self-identified as cosplayers. For the purpose of gathering a sample specific to this study, respondents were residents of the continent of North America and 18 years of age or older. The survey contained a total of 32 questions, three of which were optional. Best efforts were made to ensure each of the other 29 questions was answered, but a few respondents were able to skip a few questions. For this reason, some of the tables may show a participant number of less than 529. Questions that were determined as not relevant to the findings of this study have been omitted. Percentages have been rounded up to the closest decimal point. Due to this, some totals may add up to more or less than one hundred percent.

Results – Demographic Profile

Respondents were first asked to select their age, gender, sexual orientation, the race in which they most identified, and country of residence. The average age of

respondents (*N*=506) was 23.8 percent. The birth year with the largest number of respondents was 1993, at 14.0 percent.

Table 1 shows respondent gender selections. The figures show a much higher percentage of female cosplayers at 76.6 percent, compared to male at 21.4 percent and respondents of other gender at 2.1 percent. Percentages for gender and sexual orientation have been compared on Table 2. For this survey, the term “straight” was used to describe heterosexual orientation. The total of straight (heterosexual) respondents was 62.6 percent. The number of straight females at 61.0 percent was 1.6 percent lower than the percentage of the total. The number of straight males at 73.5 percent was 10.9 percent higher than the percentage of the total. The number of straight other-gendered at 9.1 percent was 53.8 percent lower than the total. Bisexual orientation was the second highest selection with 15.7 percent. Male bisexuals were the lowest gender percentage in comparison to the total. Differences among all three gender designations were not large enough to be significant. All other designations selected, including pansexual, asexual, gay, and other, were not large enough to be individually significant and were compiled under the “other” category at 21.7 percent.

Table 3 shows race representation data. Cosplayers that identified as white were the majority of the sample at 72.4 percent. The second and third highest racial categories were “Latin American, Hispanic, Latino or Spanish” with 6.0 percent, and “Chinese” at 4.2 percent. All other designations selected were not large enough to be individually significant and were compiled under the “other” category at 17.4 percent.

The country on the continent of North America where respondents resided is shown on Table 4. Together respondents from Canada at 49.0 percent and the United

States 48.4 percent made up the majority of the sample. Remaining countries selected by respondents (Mexico 2.1 percent; Costa Rica 0.4 percent; El Salvador 0.2 percent) were in minimal amounts and have been combined in the “other” category at 2.6 percent.

Table 1		
Gender (N=529)		
	Number of Respondents	Percent of Total
Female	405	76.6
Male	113	21.4
Other	11	2.1

Table 2				
Sexual Orientation (N=529)				
	Percent Female	Percent Male	Percent Other	Percent of Total
Straight	61.0	73.5	9.1	62.6
Bisexual	16.8	11.5	18.2	15.7
Other	22.2	15.0	72.7	21.7

Total results for sexual orientation *N*=529, total straight 331, total bisexual 83, total other 115.

Table 3		
Race (N=529)		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
White	383	72.4
Latin American, Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	32	6.0
Chinese	22	4.2
Other	92	17.4

Table 4		
Location of Residence on Continent of North America (N=529)		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
Canada	259	49.0
United States	256	48.4
Other	14	2.6

Table 5 shows the educational background of respondents. Those with post-secondary education comprised 71.5 percent of the total. Respondents with only high school education were 23.8 percent. The lowest selected categories were “some high

school” at 4.2 percent and “other” at 0.6 percent. Education levels were compared with gender but there were no major differences.

Respondent employment fields are shown on Table 6. The total of employed respondents made up 92.2 percent of the sample, while unemployed respondents comprised 8.8 percent. The majority of respondents, 41.2 percent, were currently students. The most selected job categories were “Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media” at 16.4 percent, and “Sales and Related” at 7.5 percent. Employment categories with minimal numbers were combined under “other,” equalling 26.1 percent.

Table 7.0 shows yearly income for respondents in US dollars. Respondents most frequently (46.5 percent) selected “Less than 15,000” yearly income. This could partially be explained by the high incidence of students that participated in the survey. Students made up over half of individuals who selected this category, at 56.9 percent. Unemployed respondents additionally made up 8.4 percent of respondents who selected this category. Other income categories selected were: “25,000-40,000” at 12.1 percent; “15,000-25,000” at 11.3 percent; “40,000-70,000” at 7.8 percent; “70,000 or higher” at 2.9 percent. Respondents chose “Prefer not to answer” at the rate of 19.5 percent. Table 7.1 shows the change in results when respondents who identified as “Student” and “Unemployed,” as well as individuals who chose “Prefer not to answer” as their income, were removed from the Table.

Table 5		
Education (N=529)		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
Secondary Education (College, Undergraduate, Masters, PhD)	378	71.5
High School	126	23.8
Some High School	22	4.2
Other	3	0.6

Table 6		
Employment (N=524)		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
Student	216	41.2
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sport and Media	86	16.4
Sales and Related	39	7.4
Unemployed	46	8.8
Other	137	26.1

Total results for employment *N*=524, total employed 478, total unemployed 46.

Table 7.0		
Income (N=514)		
Annual Income	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
Less than $15,000	239	46.5
$15,000-$25,000	58	11.3
$25,000-$40,000	62	12.1
$40,000-$70,000	40	7.8
$70,000 or higher	15	2.9
Prefer not to answer	100	19.5

Total results for "Less than 15,000" *N*=239, total students 136, total unemployed 20

Table 7.1		
Income, with "Prefer not to answer," "Student," "Unemployed" removed (N=230)		
Annual Income	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
Less than $15,000	82	35.7
$15,000-$25,000	44	19.1
$25,000-$40,000	57	24.8
$40,000-$70,000	36	15.7
$70,000 or higher	11	4.8

Results – Cosplay Behaviour

Respondents were asked to select all cosplay and costume fandom genres in which they participated. Out of the 529 respondents, a total of 2980 different genres were selected, with an average of 5.6 choices per respondent. Female respondents selected an average of 5.9 different genres. Male respondents selected an average of 4.5. Other-gendered respondents selected an average of 6.9. Table 8 shows respondent frequency for the five highest selected categories. The most frequent

selections were “Anime and/or Manga” at 75.0 percent and “Video and or/Computer Game” at 69.2 percent.

Table 8		
Cosplay/Costume Fandom Genre Participation (N=529)		
	Number of Times Chosen	Percentage of Respondents
Anime and/or Manga	397	75.0
Video and or/Computer Game	366	69.2
Comic and/or Graphic Novel	246	46.5
Fantasy	215	40.6
Cartoon	194	36.7

Respondents (*N*=529) were asked “How long have you been Cosplaying? (please select one).” Most frequently selected were “3-5 years” at 26.3 percent and “5-10 years” at 24.2 percent. The average amount of time respondents had been cosplaying was 4.6 years.

All types of events that respondents (*N*=528) attended to cosplay were selected in response to the question, “What type of events do you Cosplay at? (please select all that apply).” Results showed that 92.4 percent of respondents attended “Conventions or Fan Expos.” The second most selected choice was “I go out in public!” at 39.8 percent, followed by “Film Screenings” at 35.0 percent and “Masquerades” at 34.1 percent. Respondents selected an average of 2.9 choices. When questioned “How many Cosplay events do you attend yearly? (please select one)” (*N*=529), the most common choice was “1-4” at 68.4 percent. Only 1.7 percent of respondents selected “None.” Of those who did select “None,” the most common reason given in text box provided for not attending cosplay events was “Retired” from cosplaying.

When asked “Do you compete in any Cosplay competitions or masquerades?” respondents (*N*=529) most frequently selected “None” at 64.7 percent. The second

highest selection was “1-2” times per year at 28.9 percent. The overall number of respondents that competed at least once a year at events was 35.3 percent.

Respondents (*N*=529) were asked “How often do you Cosplay in a group? (please select one).” Four options were given: “Never,” “Occasionally,” “Often,” “Always.” The highest responses were “Occasionally” at 51.4 percent, “Often” at 30.1 percent, and “Always” at 8.3 percent. “Never” was chosen at a rate of 8.3 percent.

Results – Creative

Table 9 shows responses to the question “Do you buy your costumes or construct them yourself?” The majority of respondents chose “I construct the majority of my costumes and buy small additions” at a rate of 44.4 percent. “I buy my costumes” was selected the least amount of times at 3.2 percent.

When asked “How many different costumes do you wear per year?” (*N*=529), the most common response was “3-5” costumes per year at 41.2 percent. This was closely followed by “1-2” costumes per year at 37.2 percent. Respondents wearing five or more costumes per year equalled to 21.0 percent while “None” was selected by 0.3 percent of respondents. Responses to “How much do you usually spend on creating one costume (including props)?” (*N*=518) produced an average of $106.71 per costume.

Table 9		
Do you buy your costumes or construct them yourself? (N=529)		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
I construct the majority of my costumes and buy small additions	235	44.4
I construct my costume completely (Exception: components requiring highly specialized machinery or skills such as wig or shoe making)	143	27.0
I buy the majority of my costumes and create small additions or modifications	134	25.3
I buy my costumes	17	3.2

Respondents were asked “How do you decide what character you will be participating as? (please choose the one that is most important to you),” and their choices are shown in Table 10. The most frequently given reason was “Visual appeal of character” at 38.6 percent. “Character personality” at 22.1 percent and “Personal similarities to character” at 17.8 percent were also popular choices. The least-chosen option was “Character popularity” at 0.9 percent.

Table 10		
How do you decide what character you will be participating as? (please choose the one that is most important to you) (N=529)		
	Number of Times Chosen	Percentage of Total
Visual appeal of character (costume. attributes)	204	38.6
Character personality	177	22.1
Personal similarities to character	94	17.8
Other	42	7.9
Collaborating with a larger group of people	26	4.9
Availability of costume components or materials	26	4.9
Budget	15	2.8
Character popularity	5	0.9

Responses (*N*=512) to the question “How far in advance of an event do you generally start working on your costume (including props)? (please select one)” showed the highest selection of “4 months or longer” at 35.5 percent. The average start time for construction was around 3.5 months before the event. When asked “How long do you usually work on a costume (including props)?” (*N*=488), answers indicated an average of 277.2 hours were spent per costume.

Survey participants were asked details about self-learning and outside learning in regard to costume design. Table 11 shows the top five selected responses to the question “Have you taught yourself any new techniques in order to make costumes or components? (please select as many as apply).” The response of “No” was chosen 5.7

percent. Overall, a total of 2817 techniques were chosen by those who had learned techniques at an average of six per person. Female respondents chose an average of 6.2 techniques. Male respondents chose an average of five techniques. Other-gendered respondents chose an average of eight techniques. The top two choices were “Sewing” at 70.7 percent and “Wig or Hairpiece styling” at 63.9 percent.

When asked to select all applicable answers for “Have you pursued outside learning in order to make costumes or components? (please select as many as apply)” (*N*=510), 27.5 percent said “No.” Respondents who had pursued outside learning most commonly selected “Friends or Family member taught me” at 64.1 percent, followed by “Other” at 11.8 percent. In the provided text box for “Other,” respondents most commonly described learning from “Online Tutorials/Guides/Videos” and “Internet.”

Table 11		
Have you taught yourself any new techniques in order to make costumes or components? (N=509)		
	Number of Times Chosen	Percentage of Respondents
Sewing	360	70.7
Wig or Hairpiece styling	325	63.9
F/X Makeup	245	48.1
Pattern drafting	214	42.0
Dyeing	209	41.1

Figure 12 shows the top four responses to “In order to Cosplay the character, do you adopt any of their traits or characteristics? (please select all that apply).” Respondents answered “No” at a rate of 7.4 percent. A total of 1490 traits were selected by respondents. The most popular selections were “Poses” at 87.7 percent and “Posture” at 71.3 percent.

Table 12		
In order to Cosplay the character, do you adopt any of their traits or characteristics? (please select all that apply) (N=527)		
	Number of Times Chosen	Percentage of Respondents
Poses	462	87.7
Posture	376	71.3
Catchphrases	280	53.1
Accents or Dialects	190	36.1

Respondents were asked if they had participated in temporary or permanent body modification. Figure 13 shows the top four responses given for “Have you ever modified your body in a semi-permanent or temporary way to more closely resemble a character? (please select as many as apply).” A total of 1542 answers were selected by respondents who had modified their bodies. The answer “No” was given by 14.9 percent of respondents. The top four selected answers were selected in similar frequency: “F/X Makeup” at 52.5, “Gender (Crossplay)” at 46.4 percent, “Haircut” at 45.2 percent, and “Contacts” at 42.9 percent.

When asked “Have you ever modified your body in a permanent way to more closely resemble a character? (please select as many as apply)” (*N*=525), the most selected answer was “No” at 93.7 percent.

Table 13		
Have you ever modified your body in a semi-permanent or temporary way to more closely resemble a character? (please select as many as apply) (N=524)		
	Number of Times Chosen	Percentage of Respondents
F/X Makeup	275	52.5
Gender (Crossplay)	243	46.4
Haircut	237	45.2
Contacts	225	42.9

Table 14 shows responses to “What are your personal goals participating in Cosplay? (please select all that apply).” A total of 1627 selections were made by respondents at an average of 3.1 per person. The number of respondents that only

selected one answer made up 11.0 percent of the total sample. Within this 11.0 percent, respondents most commonly chose “To have fun and be social,” at a rate of 82.8 percent of single responses. The overall most common selection was also “To have fun and be social” at 95.8 percent, followed by “To belong to a community with people that share the same passion” at 68.3 percent.

Table 14		
What are your personal goals participating in Cosplay? (please select all that apply) (N=526)		
	Number of Times Chosen	Percentage of Respondents
To have fun and be social	504	95.8
To belong to a community with people that share the same passion	359	68.3
To transform fantasy into reality	254	48.3
To create a recognizable but not necessarily completely accurate version of my character	145	27.6
To create an accurate replica of the character	227	43.2
To create a complete replica of the character and adopt their personality and traits	99	18.8
Other	39	7.4

Respondents were asked the optional question “Are you a member of any online Cosplay websites or communities? (please type in the boxes below).” A total of 543 websites were listed. The highest membership percentages are listed in Table 15.

Table 15	
Are you a member of any online Cosplay websites or communities? (N=277)	
Website	Percentage of Respondents
http://cosplay.com/	78.0
http://www.deviantart.com/	31.4
http://www.acparadise.com/	17.7

Total respondents *N*=529, answered question 277, did not answer question 252.

Results –Written Responses

The optional question “What is your design process? Please explain how you research your character and how you go about creating your costume. (please type

your reply in the box)" was asked of respondents. Table 16 shows word frequency trends for written responses.

Table 16		
Written Responses – Question 31 (N=432)		
Commonly Observed Words	Frequency of Use By Respondents	Observations
Context: Choosing Character or Theme		
like personality (ities) design [i.e., character, outfit] love (ed), beloved	69 25 20 16	Words frequently used in descriptions of how respondents decided on their cosplay character or theme.
Context: Initial Research and Development		
anime game [i.e., computer, video] manga source [i.e., material, media, primary] comic	64 48 29 18 14	Words frequently used to describe the type of media where respondents were finding the characters or themes they planned to cosplay.
research (ed) (ing) find (ing) watch, re-watch gather reference read (ing), re-read play (ing) [i.e., games, media] collect (ion)	130 121 101 20 36 39 31 24	Words frequently used by respondents to describe how they went about finding and learning more about their characters or themes.
online / internet, net Google	76 32	
picture (s) / image(s) (ry) angle (s) [i.e., views of the character] photo screen (capture) (cap) (shot)	217 53 50 38	Words used to describe the various types of reference that were collected by respondents in the research stage.
sketch, sketchbook draw (ing)	80 35	Words respondents used to describe activities in their process.
Context: Learning and Construction		
(re) create design (ed) (ing) construction tutorial learn technique / method	73 60 32 23 17 25	Words used by respondents to describe their work plan and some ways they may learn new skills in order to carry out the plan.
list (s) plan (s) (ing) Break (ing) (up) (down) [i.e., components]	48 47 18	Words used by respondents to explain how they organise.
pattern (s) sew (ing) (ed)	194 144	Words used by respondents to describe construction techniques

draft (ing) modify alter (s) (ing) (ations)	61 58 45	used.
buy /purchase shop (ping) gather thrift / second hand (store)(shop) value village	206 44 16 33 8	Words used by respondents to describe various ways they find materials and components for their cosplay.
idea inspire (es) (ed) (ation) (ational) original [i.e., unique design] story [i.e., creation or expansion]	42 19 9 7	Words used by respondents to describe creating unique ideas, expanding on the original work, problem-solving, and experimenting.
test(s) (ing) (-run) mock-up	12 7	Words used by respondents to describe test stages.
Context: Social Interaction		
friend [i.e., influence of, input from] help/advice [i.e., from or to others] cosplay (ers) (ed) [i.e., work by others] people [i.e., referencing their work] ask [i.e., others for help, advice] forum [i.e., getting tips, advice from]	37 41 21 18 13 14	Words used by respondents to describe obtaining influence, advice, and inspiration from others.
Context: Final Preparation and Authenticity		
accurate (ly) reality (istic) pose (s) (ing) [i.e., research, practice] practice [i.e., wearing costume, traits] mimic (ing) / copy (ing) / act (ing) perfect (tionist)	28 16 15 10 11 7	Words used by respondents to describe activities done to prepare to cosplay, and what is involved in "authenticity."

Findings: Stage Two

Method

On-site ethnographic research including casual interviews and photography of cosplayers was conducted at two fan conventions: San Diego Comic Con July 21-24/2011 (San Diego) and Fan Expo Canada August 26-28/2011 (Toronto).

Sample

Photographs taken of consenting cosplayers at both events were analyzed for visual indicators of gender. A total of 13 photographs were taken at San Diego Comic Con. A total of ten photographs were taken at Fan Expo Canada. Some cosplayers

were wearing costumes that did allow identification of gender and gender was not noted by observers while on-site. In this case, gender was marked as unknown.

Results – Photographic Observations

Findings for a total of 13 photographs taken at San Diego Comic Con are shown in Table 17. A total of 32 different cosplayers were photographed. Female cosplayers made up 56.3 percent of the sample. Male cosplayers made up 37.5 percent. Those of unknown gender made up 6.3 percent.

Findings for a total of ten photographs taken at Fan Expo Canada are shown on Table 18. A total of 16 different cosplayers were photographed. Female cosplayers made up 50 percent of the sample. Male cosplayers made up 50 percent.

Table 17			
San Diego Comic Con Photographs - Gender (N=32)			
Total Number of Cosplayers in Photos	Total Male Cosplayers in Photos	Total Female Cosplayers in Photos	Total Unknown Cosplayers in Photos
32	12	18	2

Table 18			
Fan Expo Canada Photographs - Gender (N=16)			
Total Number of Cosplayers in Photos	Total Male Cosplayers in Photos	Total Female Cosplayers in Photos	Total Unknown Cosplayers in Photos
16	8	8	0

Analysis: Demographics and Stereotypes

Analysis of findings from Stage One showed clear trends. The average respondent age was 23.8 years old. The majority of cosplayers were female at 76.6 percent, while 21.4 percent were male, and 2.1 percent were “other.” Cosplayers photographed at on-site events for Stage Two showed similar gender findings. The majority of cosplayers photographed were female at 54.2 percent. The total male

cosplayers photographed were 41.7 percent. The higher percentage of male cosplayers on-site may have been explained by the frequency of female cosplayers observed to be accompanied by a male cosplay partner.

As described in the literature review earlier, stereotypes of fandom and cosplay participants have allowed media sources to portray participants as “predominantly male” (Rogow, 1991, p. 107). The current findings clearly show that this stereotype is untrue. Although there were male cosplayers, they were very much the minority.

Findings in multiple areas of this study expressed a lower creative participation rate for males. Of male cosplayers, 5.3 percent said “I buy my costumes,” compared with 2.5 percent of female cosplayers. Male cosplayers participated in fewer cosplay genres, at an average of 4.5 choices compared to female cosplayers at 5.9 and “other” gendered cosplayers at 6.9. In response to the question “Have you taught yourself any new techniques in order to make costumes or components?” male respondents again selected fewer, with an average of five. Female respondents selected an average of 6.2 techniques, and “other” gendered respondents eight. The reasons for lower male participation are likely related to societal pressures that push individuals to behave within normative gender identities. Historically, activities such as handicrafts and sewing done in the private space of the home have been seen as “feminine.” Men who participated in similar activities risked being seen as “effeminized” (Danahay, 2005, p. 74). Deviating from these standard gender roles could have strong consequences (Denmark et al., 1993). Male participants who take an interest in clothing for cosplay may be forced to deal with the same suspicions with which males interested in fashion

are looked upon (Schreier, 1989, p. 2), including questions about their sexual orientation.

Across all male and female categories the majority of respondents selected “Straight” at 62.6 percent. The highest percent of other-gendered respondents selected “Bisexual” at 18.2 percent. Results conclude that possible associations with homosexuality as a pre-requisite for male cosplayer participation are unfounded. Of male cosplayers, 73.5 percent selected “Straight” and only 7.0 percent selected “Gay” (homosexual).

The most frequent category of race identification by respondents was “White,” at 72.4 percent. These findings were not unexpected when considering that the majority of respondents reside in Canada (49.0 percent) and the United States (48.4 percent), countries that both have predominantly white populations (Statistics Canada, 2006). In fact, the United States 2010 census lists a 72.4 percent white population (Hixson, 2011), the exact same percentage found in this study.

This study has shown that the majority of cosplayers have above-average educations and likely above-average intelligence. Seventy-one point five percent of respondents had some post-secondary education (College, Undergraduate, Masters, PhD) and of the remaining respondents, 23.8 percent had completed high school. A total of 92.2 percent of cosplay respondents were employed and only 8.8 percent were unemployed. The majority of respondents were students at 41.2 percent, followed by those with jobs in “Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sport and Media” at 16.4 percent, and “Sales and Related” jobs at 7.5 percent.

Both education and employment results provided a contrast to the negative associations with fandom, such as that participants are “loners” (Pollak, 2006, p. 2), or are easily influenced and hysterical (Lundy, 2010, p. 3). Being a student or working in the indicated fields suggests that participants are productive members of society with the social skills to survive in their learning or work environments. It should be noted that only 8.8 percent of respondents were employed in “Computer and Mathematical” professions, defying another stereotype associated with fandom participants. Cosplayers may or may not be technologically savvy, but very few are working specifically in these types of professions.

An average of $106.71 was spent per costume. Even though the majority of annual respondent income was “$15,000 dollars or less,” this did not inhibit respondents’ abilities to participate in cosplaying. Respondents in this income category most often indicated they were spending “$50 - $100” dollars per costume which is close to the average. They selected this amount more than any other higher income group such as those in the “$40,000-$70,000” bracket who also chose “$50 - $100” most often, but only at a percentage of 35.0.

Analysis: Behaviour and Creative Process

This section will compare data findings for closed-ended survey questions to responses to the open-ended question “What is your design process?” (*N*=432). During the content-analysis stage, four themes became apparent in cosplayer responses:

1) Choice of cosplay
2) Learning, problem-solving, and innovation

3) Social interactions

4) Authenticity

Although many of these categories overlap, it is important to review them individually. The next sections will compare the results of the survey data findings with written responses in each of these four categories. These findings will also be reviewed through the lens of participatory culture as defined by Jenkins (2009) and discussed earlier in Chapter Two. Analysis will determine whether cosplay activities and culture match up with what defines “participatory culture,” in order to determine whether cosplay is a valid form of participatory culture and should be recognized as such.

1) Choice of cosplay

Fandom is an unusual field because it is constantly evolving. Many participants in cosplay and costume fandom gather inspiration for characters from popular culture, and must be able to negotiate areas of rapid change and growth. Survey data showed that cosplayers chose an average of 5.6 separate cosplay genres in which they participated. Data and the content analysis also showed that inspiration was not regulated to one form of media; sources from television, computer and video games, comics and graphic novels, film, even original creations were listed. This indicates a comfort in participating in multiple communities within cosplay culture, and also with consuming various forms of media and technology.

Data results showed that the most important factor when respondents were deciding on a specific character or theme to cosplay was “Visual appeal of character,” at 38.6 percent (Table 10). Cosplayers explained:

> I think of characters that I have always loved and admired, and look for the costume with the most impressive visual appeal. Of course, depending on the time I have between choosing the costume and the convention, I may choose a less complex costume. I like portraying sexy characters because it grabs attention (a lot of guys, I'm sure, have fantasized about what if their favorite game, anime or comic book character came to life). [P100]

> I don't want to wear a costume that doesn't fit to my body or makes me reveal way to much skin. I want the attention to the costume not my body. [P234]

"Character personality" at 22.1 percent and "Personal similarities to character" at 17.8 percent were also popular determining factors. Based on the low percentages of agreement among these findings, it was clear that all cosplayers had their own unique criteria for deciding on characters to portray. Here are some descriptions:

> This is the first event I am going to cosplay. I choose Sailor Jupiter, because as a kid I could remember watching sailor moon on t.v. So my husband dared to do a sailor scout cosplay. I have a lot in common with Sailor Jupiter so I choose her. [296]

> When I choose my character to cosplay, it's normally one I am familiar with, or one that has the same personality as my own. I don't like going out of my comfort zone unless it's a character that I enjoy deeply enough to be different. [P298]

> First I find a character and design that I like. My rule is that I have to like the character/show. I don't costume characters just because they are popular or because I just like their design. I have to be a fan. [P101]

> I veer towards less popular characters simply because I don't want to conform to the popular standard. [P051]

2) Learning, problem-solving, and innovation

In this study, only 3.2 percent of cosplayers indicated that they bought their costumes. The majority selected "I construct the majority of my costumes and buy small additions" at 44.4 percent, followed by "I construct my costume completely" at 27.0 percent (Table 9). Cosplaying requires creativity and innovation to transform the

impossible into a living, tangible being. This high incidence of personally constructed costumes (Figure 9.1.-9.3.) in the participant group indicated that cosplayers were skilled in multiple areas of construction and able to learn new skills that could be required to create a design. When asked in the survey “Have you taught yourself any new techniques in order to make costumes or components?” only 5.7 percent of respondents answered “No” (Table 11). Cosplayers selected an average of six self-

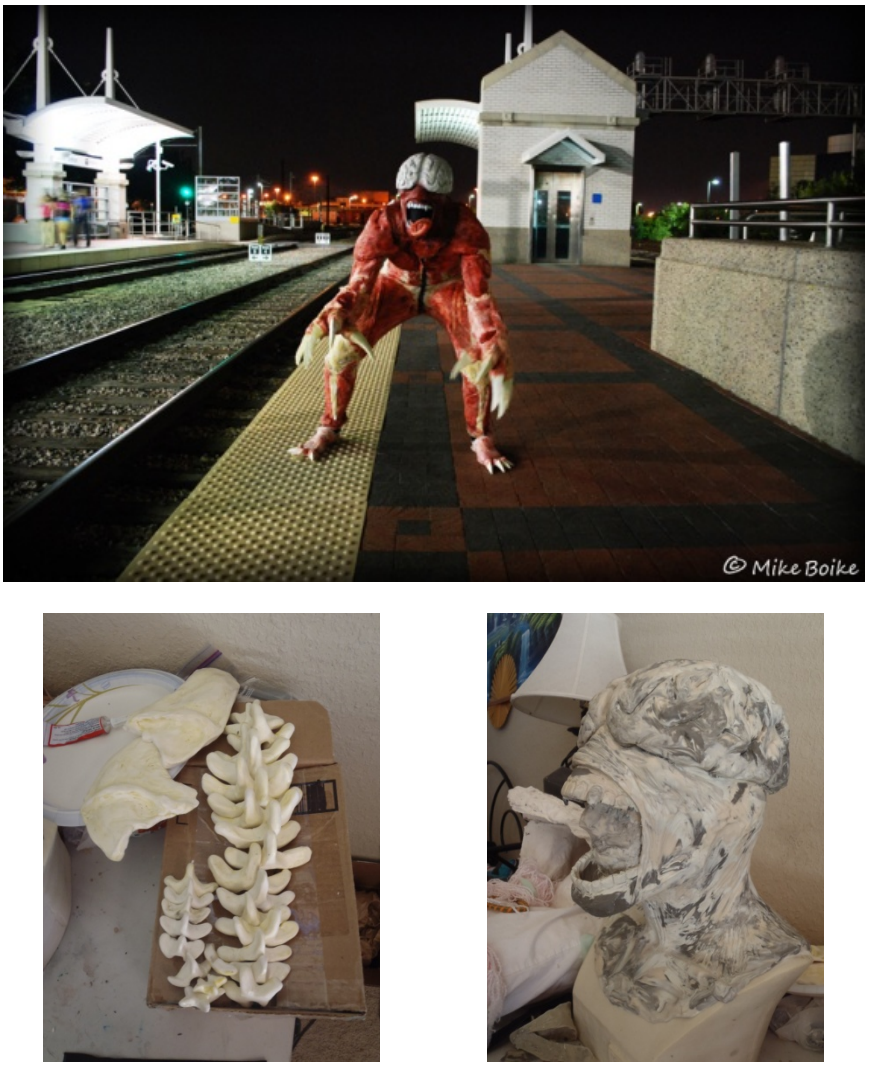


Figure 9.1.-9.3. Example of a fully constructed costume. The participant sculpted and cast the mask, created muscles using multiple materials, designed and sewed the bodysuit, sculpted the bones, and constructed all other components. The Licker from *Resident Evil* (Films and Action Figure). Photos posted with permission.

learned techniques. Respondents were asked, “Have you pursued outside learning in order to make costumes or components?” to which the majority (72.5 percent) selected at least one form of outside learning. Learning new skills as well as being able to experiment, problem-solve and modify or re-invent objects were all described as common activities cosplayers took part in during the creation process:

> And then [I] research materials etc. and look into learning how to make components that involve skills I don't currently have...like working with leather etc. [P152]
>
> I start drafting patterns and make a list of all the things I'll need to buy, make or do. I spend most of the construction time doing this because where I live [it] is not that easy to find some materials and fabrics unfortunately so I tend to improvise a lot. [P478]
>
> Find alternative ways, budgeting, problem solving, make compromises without scarifying the quality, planning, performing and presentation skills [P200]
> If something doesn't work out then I try a different technique and learn from the mistake. [P278]

For some cosplayers, one of their main goals was challenging themselves to learn (Figure 10.1.-10.3.) and expand their abilities:

> I try to choose a costume with a new aspect so I learn something new every time. [P149]
>
> I do a lot of cautious trial and error--due largely to constantly biting off more than I can chew--and usually learn something every con. [P197]
>
> […] try to choose an outfit of the character's that will challenge me in some way and help build my skills. [P114]

Figure 10.1.-10.3. Example of a costume fully constructed by a cosplayer. For this project the participant taught herself how to use Wonderflex (heat activated material) and Plastic Dip (synthetic rubber coating) in order to create the armor. The participant dyed and hand-painted multiple fabrics, created the props and armor, and fabricated the accessories. Motochika Chosokabe from *Sengoku Basara 2* (Video Game, 2006). Photos posted with permission.

Cosplay is not about producing a carbon copy of the original artist's concept or character, which is technically impossible anyway. The majority of cosplay is based on fictional characters with no real-life representation and, in many cases, not even a three-dimensional reference. Cosplayers negotiated between the source character and their own unique real-life interpretation (Figure 11). This required a high level of

creativity and could be especially important if the source did not translate easily into real life, or if aspects of the costume were impractical:

> The design called for the character to be wearing essentially gold brocade, but I knew that in reality the character (and I) would look terrible in gold from head to toe, so I altered it to a beige with chocolate and gold metallic embroidery for the appliques, and bumped up the trim to bring that gold into the costume as a balance of several colors that would be more flattering. [P307]
>
> Also, the volume of work necessary to produce traditional cell animation or a graphic novel often means that costume details are glossed over, and I put these back in - where a uniform appears to have just a gold band, I will put an ornate gold braid, for example. I really enjoy focusing on details like this. [P199]
>
> I often make an effort to include pockets in my cosplays, as being able to carry my cell phone, wallet, and maybe camera without a huge bag is pretty useful. [P490]
>
> For gijinkas (humanoid','personification',or 'anthropomorphic' form of a non-human thing like Pokemon, Digimon, etc.) I usually do more research because essentially I'm making the costume design from scratch from my own imagination. Usually I add qualities from the character that will make it easily distinguishable (like colors, ears, wings, tail etc.) and work off that. [P386]

Figure 11. Cosplayers wearing their own interpretation of the TARDIS, a spacecraft from *Doctor Who* (TV series 1963-89, 2005-present). Taken at San Diego Comic-Con 2011 (San Diego). Photo by researcher.

As discussed earlier, Jenkins (2007) has spoken of fan communities being touted by media analysts as “prosumers.” As prosumers, “participants both produce and consume cultural products” (Olin-Scheller, 2010, p. 41). Many cosplayers described choosing to expand the storyline surrounding a character, developing a cross-over version with other media inspiration (Figure 12), or designing something that was entirely original (37 percent created original characters). All these activities added to the depth and fan mythology surrounding a character and also indicated cosplayers were prosumers. Some examples:

> Depending on how I want the costume to look, depends on how accurate it will be to the character. I've taken a Kingdom Hearts Cosplay of Kairi and completely transformed it into what I thought she'd look like if she ever visited Halloween Town, not only did I envision the outfit, I also envisioned the keyblade that she'd have with it. [P437]

> If I'm not cosplaying as a character from a pre-existing story, I like to write the background of my character, maybe write a short story about them, and imagine him in different circumstances. […] I think about what my character does for work, what's his rank in society, and try to design the costume from that. [P045]

Figure 12. Cosplayer designed characters based on a *Batman* (Comic, TV, Film) and *Chicago* (Musical, Film) crossover. Taken at San Diego Comic-Con 2011 (San Diego). Photo by researcher.

3) Social interactions

Modern spaces for community have been substantially reduced by current cultural practices. Fan cultures such as cosplay have filled this gap to provide community and acceptance (Napier, 2006). The shared activity of cosplay is a means of social bonding and has historically contributed to a sense of connectivity and community. When asked "What are your personal goals participating in Cosplay? (please select all that apply)," the two highest responses were "To have fun and be social" at 95.8 percent and "To belong to a community with people that share the same passion" at 68.3 percent. The geographical spread of cosplayers has facilitated the development of very large online cosplaying communities where members are able to share their work, ask and provide advice, and interact with people who share the same interests as they do. This interaction was described by participants:

> I also use cosplay.com for help. under the forums they have sewing tips and also other tips that either can be specific to a character, or about a general topic. [P244]

> Once I've worked to the best of my abilities, I don the costume and display it. In which I can receive feedback and critique from other cosplayers. [P462]

> I post the progress photos on public social sites to get the opinion of people that also cosplay and create looks as well. [P289]

Survey respondents listed a total of 543 cosplay websites or communities they were members of (Table 15). The most commonly listed were: http://cosplay.com/ (78.0 percent), http://www.deviantart.com/ (31.4 percent), and http://www.acparadise.com/ (17.7 percent). The content analysis revealed many cosplayers referred to online cosplay communities for help and inspiration, or visited these websites to see how other cosplayers had created their intended characters:

> If it's for a specific character, I look at other people's cosplays to see how they have made the look work in real life. [P004]

> In most cases, I will come across other people who have done the costume, or one like it, before I have and I often look at those, too. I find what is iconic about this character that I need to keep, what other people have done that really works, and what some of them have done that I feel I could improve upon. [P370]

> I always try to see what other people have done with the same or similar characters as an idea of what to do or what not to do. [P064]

Although cosplayers were very active in online communities, they were also social in real life. When respondents were questioned about how often they participated in group cosplay, only 8.3 percent said “Never.” This indicated that 91.7 percent of cosplayers participated in group cosplay at a minimum of “Occasionally” (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Example of a group cosplaying characters from *Scooby-Doo* (TV series 1969-present). Taken at Fan Expo Canada 2011 (Toronto). Photo by researcher.

These interactions influenced and supported cosplay as a social activity. Cosplayers described relationships with cosplaying friends:

> I have a group of friends who all make really great costumes. When any of us plan a new costume, we run it past each other for suggestions, constructive criticism and aspects we may have overlooked. [P044]

> Sometimes I do group cosplays and usually as a group we find a show, etc. that we all enjoy, and usually the characters we choose to cosplay correlate to our real-life personalities. We make concessions for one another, and sometimes, I may not know a series or a character that well, but if it's important to my friends, I'll try my best to make an accurate costume, and become an accurate representation of the character. [P268]

> It's also a bonus if you can find others from the same show, anime, video game, etc. Makes it a more fun experience, and they can also help you out if needed. ^^ [P352]

When cosplayers were questioned “Have you pursued outside learning in order to make costumes or components?” the most popular choice was “Friends or Family member taught me” at 64.1 percent. In the written responses, cosplayers also frequently described getting help from friends or family while in the construction stage of their process:

> I'm not a strong seamstress, so I usually get help from friends if any sewing work needs to be done, but I usually make my own props. [P074]

> […] then discuss with my mother about how to make it. We plan, I sketch, and sew (she helps me with tricky parts). I make props and accessories. [P333]

> My mother helps me a lot with reading patterns and sewing, but I've gotten much better at it since taking costume construction classes in college. My dad likes to help me with props and other costume pieces that require tools. I like that my parents like helping me. [P268]

4) Authenticity

The redefinition of physical identity is deeply engrained in the concept of cosplay. Unfortunately there has also been confusion (particularly negative) about how far cosplayers will go to “become” a character. However, when respondents in this study were asked “Have you ever modified your body in a permanent way to more closely resemble a character?” 93.7 percent of respondents answered “No.” Respondents were also asked “What are your personal goals participating in Cosplay? (please select all that apply).” The option most closely related to “becoming” a character was, “To create a complete replica of the character and adopt their personality and traits” which was only selected by 18.8 percent of respondents. While cosplaying a character, participants most frequently adopted traits of their character-inspired in the way of “Poses” at 87.7 percent (Figure 14) and “Posture” at 71.3 percent (Table 12).

Contrary to generalizations that fandom participants are taking part in activities because they are “seeking escape” (Rogow, 1991, p. 107), the findings of this study indicated that rather than attempting to replace their own personality or lives with a fictional one, cosplayers preferred to create a recognizable, visual (surface) representation; in fact, among respondents, posing for a photograph was the most common act of performing as the source character. Butler’s research on performative identity (1999) supports these findings. She describes gender as a construct of the acts of a person and not what the person actually is. This concept of a performed or fluid surface identity can also be applied cosplay, and helps to explain why cosplayers did not need to submerge their own identities to become fictional characters. Instead they were able to intentionally negotiate temporary identities by acts of repetition such as

Figure 14. Participant adopting poses inspired by the source character Kyoshi Warrior Suki*, Avatar: The Last Airbender* (TV series 2005-08). Posted with permission.

through dress, posing, and physical actions. Here are some descriptions cosplayers gave about this type of performance or the importance of their visual presentation:

> I strive to make my costumes look as much like real clothing as possible, to move and wear like real clothing, and to be as comfortable to wear as possible. I don't take shortcuts in construction - raw edges are always finished, collars and cuffs are interfaced, hems and seams are pressed, zippers are hidden and topped with a hook-and-eye, and so on. I don't skimp on quality of material, either. My goal is to make something that looked like it sprang off the screen, page, or game. [P199]
>
> It is a great feeling to make a design/costume, and someone run up to tell you how much they love it. ^_^ [P233]
>
> My favorite part of cosplay is the 'play.' The acting and the vocal work as well as all the improv involved when one is thrown into a convention situation. For one of

> my first crossplays, I spent a good month learning how to walk more like a man. I asked one of my friends from theatre to help me, and he was gracious enough to coach me with my odd request. [P268]
>
> I always think to myself, if this character was a real person. How would they look? [P387]
>
> It's a pretty extensive process but the satisfaction of creating something then being able to wear it with pride is something I revel in—if people like my work enough to ask for a photo, even better! [P515]
>
> Cosplay and the time I put into it is more for myself than any observer. [P527]

Relevance of Cosplay as a Participatory Culture

The first requirement of "participatory culture" as defined by Jenkins is that there be "relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement" (2009, p. 5). This study has shown that regardless of income, a large part of cosplaying was being able to re-invent objects and supplies as well as working with what individuals already owned (Figure 15). These types of problem-solving skills aided in reducing, if not removing, possible financial barriers. Cosplay participation was open to anyone who felt compelled to create.

The remaining four requirements are all related. Jenkins describes participatory cultures as ones that have: a "strong support for creating and sharing creations with others"; "some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices"; "members who believe that their contributions matter"; and "members who feel some degree of social connection with one another" (pp. 5-6). These aspects of participatory culture were all plainly visible in cosplay in the results of this study. Online communities as well as family and friends provided support,

encouragement, and engagement to cosplayers. Skills and knowledge were frequently passed on through online tutorials, discussions in forums, and through real-life

Figure 15. Cosplayer wearing self-made Megatron costume created from black plastic garbage cans. Character from *Transformers* (Film series). Taken at San Diego Comic-Con 2011 (San Diego). Photo by researcher.

interactions with more skilled friends and family. Over half of the respondents listed online communities and websites of which they were actual members, many of them even linking to personal pages where they had their own cosplay images displayed for public viewing. Membership, as well as the ability to post their own work and comments on these websites, indicated that cosplayers believed their work was important enough for viewing by others. Memberships in online communities, in addition to the high numbers of cosplayers that participated at least “Occasionally” in group cosplay as

discussed in the results above confirmed that members of cosplay culture felt at least some level of social connectedness with one another.

This study has shown that according to Jenkin's criteria, cosplay is indeed a viable and recognizable form of participatory culture. The cosplay community offers incentives to those who share creative expression and actively participate. These encompass such areas as acknowledgement and support from other community members and personal empowerment provided through the act of design. Participatory cultures provide many venues for learning, developing problem-solving skills, and social interactions. Embracing cosplay as a participatory culture would allow children and adults access to much-needed social benefits and environments for learning.

Chapter Five

Conclusions

This study has investigated how North American cosplayers take inspiration from two-dimensional or flat work to construct a three-dimensional, living interactive artwork through costume fandom. Comprehensive demographic information about North American cosplayers which had not existed prior to this study has also been gathered. As discussed in Chapter 4, participants consisted as 529 survey respondents (Stage One) and 48 cosplayers who were photographed (Stage Two). The methodology combined both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection.

Contributions

The purpose of this study was to gather accurate information regarding the cosplayer population in North America, and to record the creative processes they use in order to create living, interactive art through play. An intrinsic aspect of this study was to develop demographic information that provides a modern, accurate depiction of participants in cosplay and costume fandom. This data will provide solid evidence that may help reduce stigma and negative stereotypes associated with fandom and cosplay activities. Ideally it will also promote a more understanding relationship between those who are not in the community, and help empower those who are.

This is the most comprehensive study that has ever been undertaken of the creative practices of cosplayers in North America. By asking the survey participants to reflect on their personal and self-initiated work, they have been prompted to review their cosplaying as a design practice and to reflect on the different stages of creation that are

unique to them. This MRP has shown cosplayers' creative, financial, and time investments, along with ways they interpret, expand, and grow the original source material. It is a hope that by analyzing these cosplay processes and creations, the importance and artistic merit of cosplay will be visible to spectators and also contribute to a more accepting audience.

Limitations

In ethnographic research there is a risk of possible researcher bias as observations are interpreted through what is seen and experienced through the researcher's own gaze. For on-site events, these effects were limited by the fact the researcher was already comfortable in the cosplay environment and had prior knowledge and experiences of cosplay community aided in reducing the possibility of misinterpretation of observations. By participating as a cosplayer while on-site, the researcher was also able to identify herself as part of the community and maintain a level of comfortable, relaxed dialogue with individuals who were approached as part of the study.

By allowing participants to explain their actions in their own words through quotes, readers are able to draw their own conclusions. Demographic survey findings were also compared with written responses from an open-ended survey question. The resulting data was further compared to the photographic analysis from Stage Two, providing the opportunity for readers to evaluate what the researcher has determined.

Future Directions

Costume fandom is a quickly growing worldwide phenomenon that has been around much longer than the age of the word cosplay would imply. This thesis is the first comprehensive study on cosplayers in North America, addressing a significant gap in the academic literature, and also beginning to dispel the flood of misinformation about cosplay that currently exists. That being said, it is only a starting point for research on the costume fandom and cosplay communities.

The global cosplay community is enormous. Even researching a smaller section such as North America is still very large for only one researcher with limited resources and time. The next stages for future research would be to access a larger portion of cosplayers in a larger range of locations across North America. Alternatively, it may be more prudent to concentrate on one country within North America at one time in order to better control the sample. It would also be interesting to do a cross-cultural study and compare how cosplay communities have developed in different countries throughout the world.

In the current study, there was a lower response rate for communities that are harder to access through normal means, such as those with more tightly-knit communities (Furries, SCA, LARP, Re-enactment) that may not participate in general fan events that the researcher attended, or in the online communities that were contacted by the researcher. As discussed earlier, there are many different genres that each with their own fascinating nuances. These communities may have different demographic profiles and behaviours that are unique to them. They may also be dealing with their own negative misconceptions.

Further research into larger samples, more focused locations and genres would provide insights into unique attributes and behaviours of different groups, and contribute to a better understanding of cosplay and costume fandom.

Conclusion

Cosplay is a highly interactive and creative activity. This study has revealed how cosplayers in North America transform two-dimensional works to living three-dimensional characters, creating temporary identity, and negotiating the boundary between fiction and reality. These findings have highlighted cosplay as a widespread participatory activity and important venue for learning and social interaction. As such, these findings have the potential to be applied in many areas such as skill development and knowledge transfer. This study has also developed accurate data on demographics, behaviours, and creative processes that cosplayers undertake, data which was much needed. Supported by these findings it is the hope of the researcher that many of the negative stereotypes and stigmas surrounding cosplay activity will be reduced. The findings of this research will provide a starting point to empower participants in this culture, showing they are not alone, and giving them the ability to personally dispel untruths they may encounter.

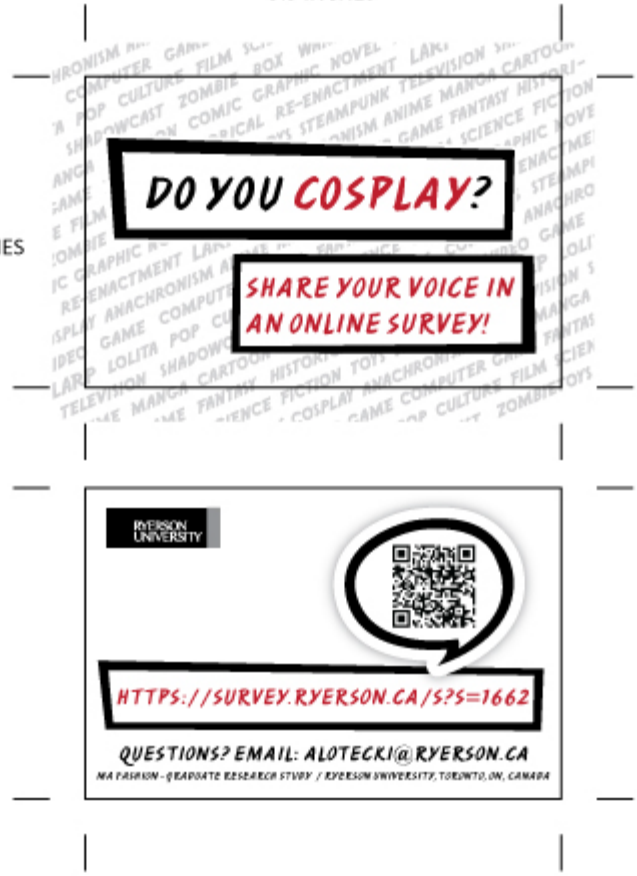
Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Card

SURVEY CARD HAND-OUT

3.3 INCHES

2.16 INCHES



Appendix A: Survey Consent Form

Project Title: Cosplay Culture: The Development of Interactive and Living Art through Play

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to be a volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators:
Ashley Lotecki, MA Fashion student, School of Graduate Studies, Ryerson University
Faculty Supervisor: Osmud Rahman, M.Des., School of Fashion, Ryerson University

Purpose and Description of the Study: This study will investigate ways that North American Cosplayers take inspiration from two-dimensional or flat work to construct a three-dimensional, living interactive artwork through costume. It has also been designed to gather information for the purpose of developing an accurate demographic representation of North American Cosplayers.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will answer a series of multiple choice and written questions about yourself and your Cosplay practices in an online survey. The estimated time for completion of this survey will be 10 minutes. Respond to the questions to the best of your ability. This survey is anonymous and no one will have access to the information you provide except for the researcher.

Risks or Discomforts: There is minimal risk associated with participation in this study. You might hesitate to provide information on yourself or your Cosplay practices but should be assured your identity will be anonymous. None of the procedures or questions used in this study are experimental in nature. The only experimental aspect of this study is the gathering of information for the purpose of analysis.

Benefits of the Study: The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of Cosplayers in North America and acknowledge the processes of creation they participate in. Ideally it will also help dispel some of the stereotypes in academia and with the public about Cosplayers and Cosplay culture. You may not personally benefit from this study.

Confidentiality: This survey will be anonymous unless the participant chooses to leave their contact information at the end of the survey. If any contact information is provided, the survey will be confidential and no one will have access to the information provided except for the researcher. The responses of all participants will remain confidential throughout the study. All data collected during the study will be kept in password-secured files on private-access computers used solely by the researcher until all analyses of the data are complete. Once data analysis is completed, data will be stored at Ryerson University in a locked cabinet in the research supervisor's office. All raw data will be destroyed within five (5) years of completion of the study. Only the researcher will have access to the data.

Incentives and Voluntary Nature of Participation: An incentive is not offered to participate in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed. At any particular point in the study, you may refuse to answer any particular question or stop participation altogether by closing your browser window.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research, you may contact:
Ashley Lotecki
alotecki@ryerson.ca

Phone number

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042

Agreement:

By checking the box below, you confirm that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. You also confirm that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. Please save a copy of this agreement or contact the researcher to email you a copy of this agreement. You have been told that by signing the Consent Agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

☐ I have read and agreed to the Consent Agreement for this study

Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. **Agreement**

BASIC INFORMATION

2. What year were you born? (please select one)
3. Gender (please select one)
4. Sexual Orientation (please select one)
5. What race do you most identify with? (please select one)
6. What is your current relationship status? (please select one)
7. Where do you currently live in North America?
8. What is your educational background? (please select one)
9. What field are you currently employed in? (please select one)
10. What is your yearly income in US dollars? (please select the closest amount)

YOUR COSPLAY EXPERIENCES

11. Have you ever partaken in any forms of Cosplay? (Not sure? Check Question 12 for a list of possible types)
12. Please check all types of Cosplay or Costume Fandom you have participated in:
13. How long have you been Cosplaying? (please select one)
14. What type of events do you Cosplay at? (please select all that apply)
15. How many Cosplay events do you attend yearly? (please select one)
16. you compete in any Cosplay competitions or masquerades?
17. How much do you spend yearly on attending Cosplay events including admission, transportation, accommodation?
18. How often do you Cosplay in a group? (please select one)
19. Do you buy your costumes or construct them yourself? (please select the most representative)
20. How many different costumes do you wear per year? (please select one)
21. How much do you usually spend on creating one costume (including props)? (US dollars)

YOUR COSPLAY DESIGN PROCESS

22. How do you decide what character you will be participating as? (please choose the one that is most important to you)
23. How far in advance of an event do you generally start working on your costume (including props)? (please select one)
24. How long do you usually work on a costume (including props)? (please type in an estimate in hours)
25. Have you taught yourself any new techniques in order to make costumes or components? (please select as many as apply)
26. Have you pursued outside learning in order to make costumes or components? (please select as many as apply)
27. In order to Cosplay the character, do you adopt any of their traits or characteristics? (please select all that apply)
28. Have you ever modified your body in a semi-permanent or temporary way to more closely resemble a character? (please select as many as apply)
29. Have you ever modified your body in a permanent way to more closely resemble a character? (please select as many as apply)
30. What are your personal goals participating in Cosplay? (please select all that apply)
31. What is your design process? Please explain how you research your character and how you go about creating your costume. (please type your reply in the box).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

32. OPTIONAL: What are the top 5 favorite Cosplays you have done or plan on doing? (This question is optional, but it would be really great if you would like to share!)
33. OPTIONAL: Are you a member of any online Cosplay websites or communities? (please type in the boxes below)
34. Are you interested in contributing more?

Appendix B: Info Sheet

INFORMATION CARD

4.25 INCHES

5.5 INCHES

INFORMATION

Project Title: Cosplay Culture: The Development of Interactive and Living Art through Play

Purpose and Description of the Study: This study will investigate ways that North American Cosplayers create living interactive artwork through costume.

Questions about the Study: If you have questions you may contact the researcher: Ashley Lotecki, alotecki@ryerson.ca, Phone number

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University - 350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3 - 416-979-5042

Thanks for contributing! Happy Cosplaying!

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

FRONT

DO YOU COSPLAY?

SHARE YOUR VOICE IN AN ONLINE SURVEY!

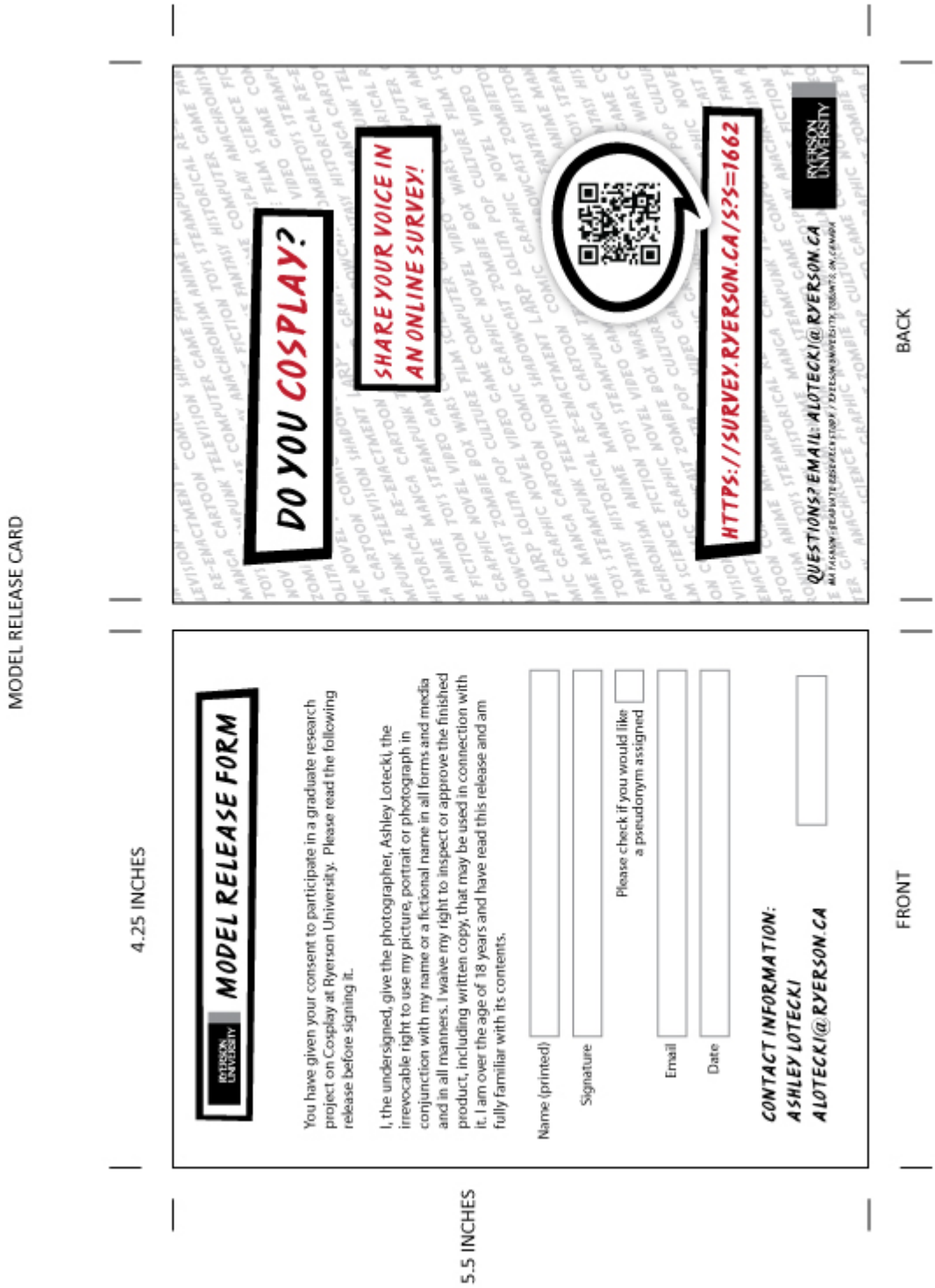
HTTPS://SURVEY.RYERSON.CA/S?S=1662

QUESTIONS? EMAIL: ALOTECKI@RYERSON.CA

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

BACK

Appendix B: Model Release



Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

Ryerson University Consent Agreement
Project Title: Cosplay Culture: The Development of Interactive and Living Art through Play

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to be a volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators:
Ashley Lotecki, MA Fashion student, School of Graduate Studies, Ryerson University
Faculty Supervisor: Osmud Rahman, M.Des., School of Fashion, Ryerson University

Purpose and Description of the Study: This study will investigate ways that North American Cosplayers take inspiration from two-dimensional or flat work to construct a three-dimensional, living interactive artwork through costume. It has also been designed to gather information for the purpose of developing an accurate demographic representation of North American Cosplayers.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to follow your personal design process in creating a single Cosplay from start to finish. The records you keep of your design process will ideally be a combination of visual and written records, the details of which can be finalized in discussion with the researcher. Your self-directed process work will be submitted to the researcher for this study within a timeline agreed upon by both parties.

Once your cosplay has been finished and debuted (if applicable), you will be asked to review your process work and the researcher may ask you questions about your process. You are not obligated to answer these questions. You may be asked to be photographed by the researcher in your Cosplay once you finish.

You may also have the opportunity to be part of a Cosplay exhibit being held in conjunction with this research. This exhibit will be held at the Canadian Design Exchange (Toronto, Ontario) by Ryerson University in June 2012 (tentative date). You are not obligated to participate. A second consent form "Ryerson University Release and Exhibit Consent" is available for participants who would like to consent to the possibility of participating in an exhibit showcasing their work and records.

Risks or Discomforts: There is minimal risk associated with participation in this study. None of the procedures or questions used in this study are experimental in nature. The only experimental aspect of this study is the gathering of information for the purpose of analysis.

Benefits of the Study: The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of Cosplayers in North America and acknowledge the processes of creation they participate in. Ideally it will also help dispel some of the stereotypes in academia and with the public about Cosplayers and Cosplay culture. You may not personally benefit from this study.

Confidentiality: Contact information you provide will be confidential and no one will have access to the information provided except for the researcher. You have the option to be assigned a pseudonym for your image, work, or likeness, if you choose. All data collected during the study will be kept in password-secured files on private-access computers used solely by the researcher until all analyses of the data are complete. Once data analysis is completed, data will be stored at Ryerson University in a locked cabinet in the research supervisor's office. All raw data will be destroyed within five (5) years of completion of the study. Only the researcher will have access to the data.

Incentives and Voluntary Nature of Participation: An incentive is not offered to participate in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research, you may contact:
Ashley Lotecki
alotecki@ryerson.ca
416-979-5000 x6298

Faculty Advisor: Osmud Rahman
orahman@ryerson.ca
416-979-5000 x 6911

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042

Agreement:

You are consenting to record and submit your cosplay design process work as outlined in the above sections for this study. Additionally, you may be selected to be photographed by the researcher, at which time you are not obligated to participate.

I, the undersigned, give the researcher, Ashley Lotecki, the irrevocable right to use my communications, process work, picture, portrait or photograph in conjunction with my name or a fictional name in all forms of media and in all manners. I understand my Cosplay work may be published or publically showcased as part of this research study. I waive my right to inspect or approve the finished product, including written copy that may be used in connection with it.

If you are selected to be photographed by the researcher, you also confirm you have no right to claim copyright over these specific images, nor moral or financial claim to these images, and that they remain property of the researcher, Ashley Lotecki. You relinquish all claims of ownership, income, editorial control and use of the resulting photographs and assign all copyright ownership to the researcher and no payment will be due.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. You also confirm that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. Please save a copy of this agreement or contact the researcher to email you a copy of this

agreement. You have been told that by signing the Consent Agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

_____
Signature

_____
Name Printed

Please check if you would like a pseudonym assigned ☐

If you opt to have a pseudonym assigned to your work, please note that your work may still include written or visual images identifiable as you. If this is your concern, please only submit work which you feel will uphold your anonymity.

_____
Date

Appendix C: Participant Release

Ryerson University Release and Exhibit Consent
Project Title: Cosplay Culture: The Development of Interactive and Living Art through Play

You have given your consent to participate in a graduate research project on Cosplay at Ryerson University. As part of this study there will be an exhibit held at the Canadian Design Exchange (Toronto, Ontario) by Ryerson University in June 2012 (tentative date). This is a release and exhibit consent form explaining what participation in such an exhibit entails. Please read the following consent form before signing it.

I, the undersigned, give the researcher, Ashley Lotecki, the irrevocable right to use my communications, process work, picture, portrait or photograph in conjunction with my name or a fictional name in all forms of media and in all manners. I understand my Cosplay work may be selected to display in an exhibit showcasing Cosplayer work as part of this research study. I waive my right to inspect or approve the finished product, including written copy that may be used in connection with it.

In the case my work is selected to be displayed in the aforementioned exhibit, I release the researcher and Ryerson University of any liability due to damage, loss, or theft of any work I submit and I assume any and all risks known or unknown. I understand that I will be responsible for any shipping costs required or incurred if I choose to participate in this exhibit and that the researcher and Ryerson University accepts no responsibility to damage to my work while being shipped to or from the exhibit.

Physical work submitted by participants specifically for display in this exhibit will be accepted on loan only. Participants will retain ownership of their pieces during the exhibit. The researcher maintains permissions and/or ownership to any other communications, process work, picture, portrait or photographs obtained in other stages of this study to which you have already legally consented to.

I am over the age of 18 years and have read this release and am fully familiar with its contents.

Name (printed):

Signature:

☐ Please check if you would like a pseudonym assigned

If you opt to have a pseudonym assigned to your work, please note that your work may still include written or visual images identifiable as you. If this is your concern, please only submit work which you feel will uphold your anonymity.

Email:

Date:

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research, you may contact:
Ashley Lotecki
alotecki@ryerson.ca

Faculty Advisor: Osmud Rahman
orahman@ryerson.ca

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042

Appendix D: Research Ethics Board Approval

RYERSON UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

To: Ashley Lotecki
MA Fashion

Re: REB 2011-172: Cosplay Culture: The Development of Interactive and Living Art through Play

Date: June 12, 2011

Dear Ashley Lotecki,

The review of your protocol REB File REB 2011-172 is now complete. The project has been approved for a one year period. Please note that before proceeding with your project, compliance with other required University approvals/certifications, institutional requirements, or governmental authorizations may be required.

This approval may be extended after one year upon request. Please be advised that if the project is not renewed, approval will expire and no more research involving humans may take place. If this is a funded project, access to research funds may also be affected.

Please note that REB approval policies require that you adhere strictly to the protocol as last reviewed by the REB and that any modifications must be approved by the Board before they can be implemented. Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication from the Principal Investigator as to how, in the view of the Principal Investigator, these events affect the continuation of the protocol.

Finally, if research subjects are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research.

Please quote your REB file number (REB 2011-172) on future correspondence.

Congratulations and best of luck in conducting your research.

Nancy Walton, Ph.D.
Chair, Research Ethics Board

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