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Abstract
Studies about comics in France have often focused on the process of cultural legitimation. This process is made complex by the composition of the French readership of comics, which consists largely of children, and by the transmedia circulation and expansion of comics, including cartoons and videogames. These factors, and the role of peers' prescription reduce the impact of cultural legitimacy. By contrast, when adults are concerned, a correlation between education and tastes in comic art can be clearly identified, as evidenced in the preference shown by adult readers with higher instruction level for graphic novels. Comic art is characterised by a coexistence of elitist and popular dimensions. If the global effects of socioeconomic groups cannot be denied (avid comics readers are also avid books readers, and avid readers of books appear to be mostly part of the upper classes), these effects have to be weighed against the historical development of the field in France: American comics and manga are not as established there as their domestic and Belgian counterparts. This article advocates considering the field of comics in its full transmedial extension and plurality, in order to better describe the cultural practices of comic readers.

Keywords: comic art; comics; readership; taste acquisition; legitimacy; media

The first sociological paper on comics was written by Luc Boltanski in 1975.[1] It described the process by which comics have grown to be recognised as an artistic expression, the "canonisation process". The recognition of aesthetic qualities in products of the mass media is a fundamental issue for popular culture, and it is significant that the first paper on comics addresses this issue. First, Boltanski describes comics as having the same properties as most mass consumption goods and so being in a dominated position in the order of legitimacy because of their strong dependence on the economic field. Then, he demonstrates how new artists emerge and, unlike traditional artists, claim their right to express themselves, some in a

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[1] Luc Boltanski: 'La constitution du champ de la bande dessinée'. In: *Actes de la Recherche en sciences sociales* 1 (Janvier 1975), p. 37-59.

more aesthetic way, others in a more coarse way. Then he separates the distinct parts of the legitimacy apparatus to demonstrate the new status of comics:

- emergence of scholarly journals, academic societies, festivals and congress, and awards;
- new publications of old or lost comics, new shops specializing in comics;
- new editorial behaviours, including more hard cover publications and specific collections dedicated to comics appearing in traditional book publishing companies.

Beyond examining the elements allowing the field to structure itself, Boltanski tried, with the few statistics existing at that time, to describe the comics' audience. In the early period of comics, most readers were children and members of the working class. In the 1960s, however, the democratisation of access to secondary school allowed a new audience to emerge. These new readers were older and more qualified. As they did not have the skills to take interest in the legitimate arts, they converted their cultural aptitudes newly acquired in school into their interest in comics. Focusing on the authors and their biography as much as in their works, they showed a strong tendency to comment and to paraphrase, which are both scholarly forms of elegy.

Boltanski's analysis followed the framework conceived by Pierre Bourdieu in the Sixties. For our moment, it might look a bit dated. Families and schools, the institutions which once transmitted cultural taste to children, seem to have a lesser influence today. Mass media, peer groups, and spare-time activities have diffused values of immediate pleasure and self-expression throughout our culture. Some sociologists, such as Dominique Pasquier and Hervé Glévarec, call into question the legitimacy theory, as these recent transformations seem to renew the process of cultural transmission.[2] For instance, Eric Maigret postulates that the stakes of legitimate culture do not really concern comics art, because comics are part of a more broad-minded culture characterized by diversity and a personal and collective search for meaning rather than the wish to establish a hierarchy.[3]

Others, closer to the Bourdieusian School, prefer to interpret the unequal distribution of cultural tendencies as a new configuration of social differences. For instance, Philippe Coulangeon, referring to Richard Peterson, shows that upper classes have a cultural omnivorism, appreciating both savant and popular culture, while lower classes mostly like

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[2] Hervé Glévarec: 'La fin du modèle classique de la légitimité culturelle'. In: Eric Maigret et Eric Macé (eds.): *Penser les médiacultures*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2006, p. 69-102. Dominique Pasquier: 'La culture comme activité sociale' In: Maigret et Macé (eds.): *Penser les médiacultures*. p. 103-120.

[3] Eric Maigret: "Bande dessinée et postlégitimité". In : Eric Maigret et Matteo Stefanelli (eds.): *La bande dessinée: une médiaculture*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2012, p. 130-148.

mass media products.[4] Specifically, in 2011, sixty-six percent of French people claimed to have read a comic book. Of that group, twenty-nine percent had read a comic book during the previous twelve months, and forty-seven percent at a previous time.[5] Hence, comics seem to be a very popular art. At the same time, the legitimacy apparatus seems to be very widespread: festivals and exhibitions, journals and shops dedicated to comics, academic and artistic books abound everywhere in France. Therefore, the art of comics should be described as a legitimate art.

Considering these theories, we have to explore the comic field to understand how the legitimacy process allows us to characterise the readership. This approach raises two questions: the first deals with the transformations of cultural transmission and therefore the specificities of the readership, and the second is about the characteristics of the comic field and the way it has been structured and transformed.

To address these issues, two surveys can be of use here. The first and most recent one was conducted by the TMO institute at the request of the Public Library of Information and will be referred below as TPO/BPI 2011.[6] It concerns a large sample of 4580 persons, aged 11 years and over, representative of the French population. My colleagues and I conducted the second one in the region Limousin. It concerns a representative sample of students in secondary education and will be referred to below as Youth Cultures survey, Limoges University, 2009. I will use one or the other, according to their relevance to the different aspects of the question I will examine.

I will first separate children and adult readers. While the majority of the nine to nineteen-year-olds sampled read comics, after the age of twenty-nine this percentage falls significantly such that only thirty percent of the sample continue to read comics between the ages of thirty and sixty. As a result, it seems reasonable to distinguish these two populations. After having examined the characteristics of these two populations, I will move to the building of the field itself.

1. How do children acquire a taste for comics?

The results from the TMO survey clearly show that one of the most significant factors contributing to a person's decision to read comics is having a parent who has read comics

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[4] Philippe Coulangeon: *Les Métamorphoses de la distinction*. Paris: Grasset, 2011.

[5] Christophe Evans, Françoise Gaudet: 'La lecture de bandes dessinées'. In: *Culture-Etudes*, 2012-2, DEPS, Ministère de la culture et de la communication, p. 1-4.

[6] Sylvain Aquatias: 'Le goût de la bande dessinée: acquisition, transmission, renforcement et abandon'. In: B. Berthou, C. Evans (eds.): *La bande dessinée: quelle lecture, quelle culture?* Paris : BPI, 2015.

himself. Although parental transmission does not impact the whole sample, it is active for at least thirty percent of the readers of comics. So, how do the readers whose parents do not read comics acquire a taste for this medium? If the data we have do not allow us to describe all the possible aspects of the transmission, one, at least, appears clearly.

Christine Détrez and Olivier Vanhée, working on manga readers, emphasize that watching cartoons often takes place before discovering comics. [7] This is probably truer for mangas which often have an adapted version in cartoons. However, the results of the survey on youth culture in Limousin show a similar conclusion for a wide range of comics. At the time of the survey, most of the comics read by the students had been broadcast on television (*Tintin, Titeuf, Naruto, Dragon Ball Z, Garfield, Les Simpson, Lucky Luke, Lou*). Television, or more accurately the cartoons it broadcasts, could be considered as a possible way to become acquainted with comic art. Fifty-two percent of the comics read by students who had read a comic book in the previous month were broadcast in cartoon versions during the year of the survey. Though we cannot demonstrate a direct relation between having seen a cartoon and having read comics, the percentage shows that television has a real impact. [8] This is no surprise: of the comics produced in other nations, those which have been adapted for television are also those which have the greatest success in France. This reflects both the commercial interest of the producers and the potential of these comics to reach new audiences through other media. [9] At that stage we cannot clearly indicate whether youngsters read comics because they have seen the cartoons or watch the cartoons because they know the comics. However, the Youth Cultures survey does suggest a causal link between watching television shows and reading the associated comics. The students were asked what their influences were in the choice of a comic book, and, as the following table shows, if we do not account for books selected by personal interest or randomly found, friends and television seem to be the main prescribers of comic books.

Reasons for choosing a comic book	Numbers	Percentage
Personal interest	310	26 %
Random	226	21 %
Advice of a friend	215	19 %
Seen on TV	138	11 %
Advice of a parent	89	8 %

[7] Christine Détrez, Olivier Vanhée: *Les Mangados: lire des mangas à l'adolescence*. Paris: BPI, 2012.

[8] Only the cartoons broadcast in the year of the survey and on subscription-free channels were taken into account. So the result is a minimum figure.

[9] Philippe Marion: 'Narratologie médiatique et médiagénie des récits'. In: *Recherches en communication* 7 (1997), p. 61-68.

Seen on the Internet	87	7 %
Seen on the paper	53	4 %
Advice from a teacher	38	3 %
Total of the answers	1156	100 %

Table 1. Reasons for choosing a comic book, students having read a comic book in the last month (n = 551), percentages calculated on the basis of the answers (several answers allowed), Youth cultures survey, Limoges University, 2009.

Parents seem to be marginal in shaping the students' selection of comics. But their influence might be more effective than it appears, passing by a general educational context. Still, no significant results appear here from the confrontation between the socio-economic classes of the parents and the advice of a parent regarding the choice of a comic book. The results of the TMO survey also show that, at the age of eleven, ninety-four percent of the children have read at least one comic book in the previous year. With such a figure, it is very unlikely to find a large distinction between socio-economic classes. Yet, we can observe a swift drop in the reading of comics as the age of the children rises, as the chart below demonstrates.
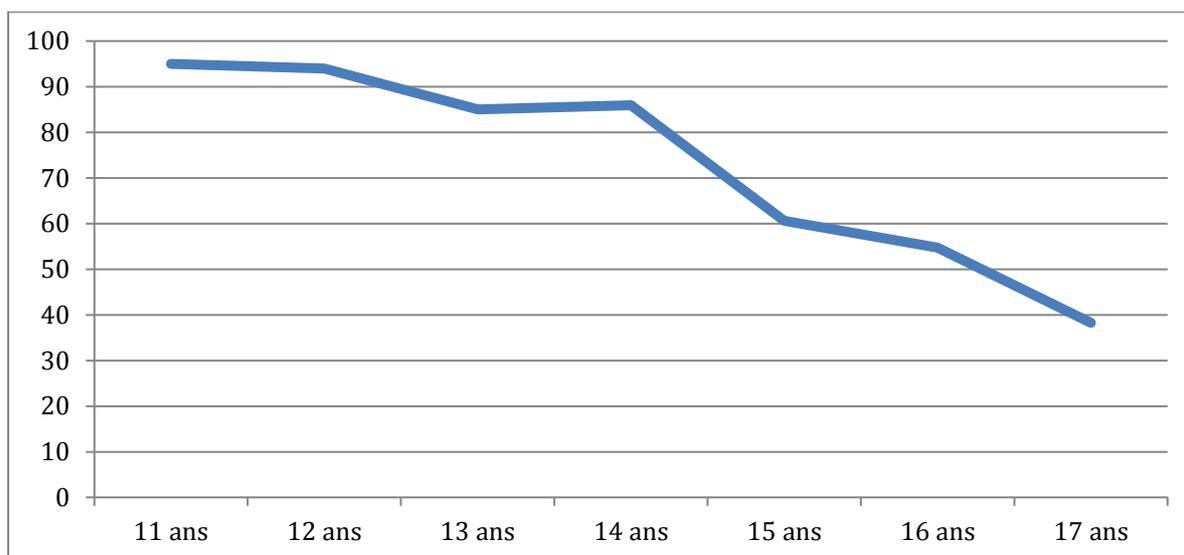

Chart 1. Readers of comics according to age, sample of the 11-17 year old (n = 433), TMO survey, BPI, 2011.

Since their beginnings, comic books in France have been considered as a means to ease reading for children.[10] Hence, the large extent of comic books to which comic books are read at a younger age is rather normal. It is possible that the decrease in reading as the children grow could be linked to differences between families and the conception they have of comics.

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[10] Olivier Piffault: 'Illustrés, petits miquets et neuvième art: 'sous-littérature'?' In: Olivier Piffault (ed.): *Babar, Harry Potter et Cie, Livres d'enfants d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2008, p. 290-302.

While there is no indication of the parents' professions in the TMO survey, the survey conducted amongst students in Limousin allows us to take this item into account.
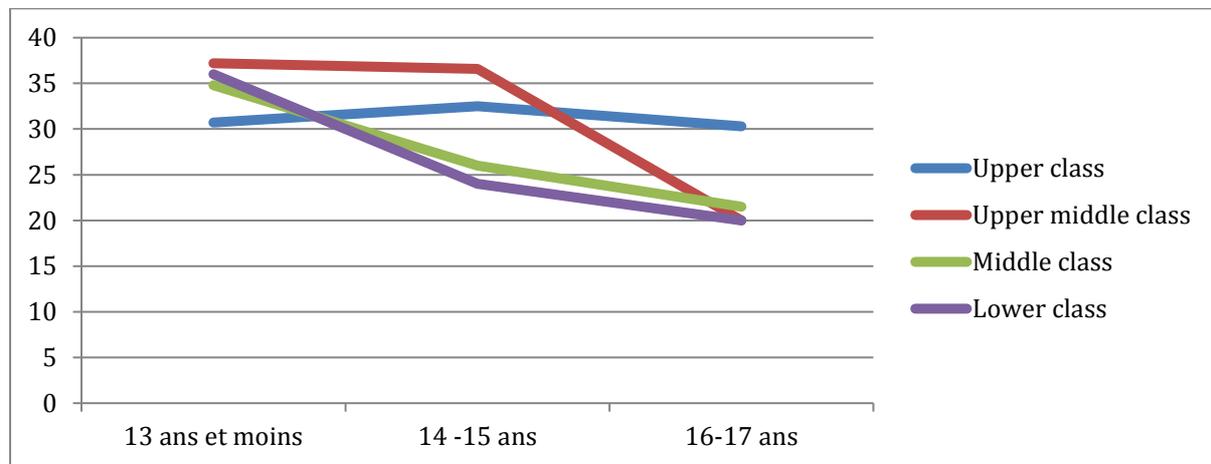

Chart 2. Decrease of comic books readers according to the social classes, Youth cultures survey, Limoges University, 2009, students having read a comic in the previous month (n = 551).

This graph shows the responses of students when asked whether they had read a comic in the previous month. The thirteen-year-old students from the upper class are not as numerous as those in the other classes. However, the number of readers of the upper class stays reasonably constant, while the proportion of readers in all the other socioeconomic classes decreases after fourteen. Most likely, these figures are too general to confirm the existence of preferences linked to socioeconomic classes. To prove this, we must consider the possible correlations between the types of comic books and the socioeconomic class of the children reading comics. To describe the types of comics, we have developed four categories: first, mangas; second, superhero comics and funnies; third, traditional comics oriented toward children and teenagers; and fourth, graphic novels and adult oriented comics. These categories are mostly editorial, but they also describe different values. For example, superheroes are often qualified as childish and mangas are described as badly drawn and violent. The results appear in the following table.

Socioeconomic classes/Types of comics read in the last month	Mangas	Youth-oriented traditional comics	Superhero comics and funnies	Graphic novels and adult comics	Total
Upper class	18	66	5	11	100
Upper middle class	13	81	3	3	100
Middle class	17	77	4	2	100
Lower class	14	86	0	0	100

Table 2: Types of comics read according to the social classes, students reading comics (n =551), Youth cultures survey, Limoges University, 2009.

The students, regardless of socioeconomic class, clearly prefer youth-oriented traditional comics, many of which are "classics" such as *Asterix* or *Tintin*. There is only a statistical correlation between a minority of young people of the upper class and the adult-oriented comics, concerning eleven percent of that class. Thus, there is a difference in the choice of books that is related to socioeconomic classes, but it is relatively small compared to the large appeal of youth-oriented traditional comics. In conclusion, regarding children, the influence of friends and television together seems more important than that of the socioeconomic classes, despite the fact that a legitimacy effect appears clearly enough for the upper class.

2. Reading Comics in Adulthood: A Taste Related To the Educational Level

Regarding adults, Christophe Evans and Françoise Gaudet observe that reading comics, like reading books and other cultural practices, is positively related to qualification level and socioeconomic classes. [11] The two surveys clearly show that reading of comics increases in proportion to the reading of books. Further, reading books is also linked to the level of qualification.[12] This result demonstrates that legitimacy has an influence, as it is the most qualified part of the population that reads comics in adulthood. In the TPO survey, traditional comics are appreciated by all readers, whatever their qualification. However, that category is likely too large to reflect the effects of legitimacy. Among superhero comics and funnies, mangas, and graphic novels, the readership is significantly different. The table below presents a comparison between readers' qualification levels and their preferences for different types of comics.

Preference for a comic style/ qualification levels	Style	No diploma or inferior to A-levels	A levels and BTEC	BA, BS/BSc	Master and PhD
Like	Mangas	32	33	41	27
Do not like		68	67	59	73
Total		100	100	100	100
Like	Superhero comics and funnies	57	50	53	49
Do not like		43	50	47	51
Total		100	100	100	100
Like	Graphic novels	42	38	49	53
Do not like		58	62	51	47
Total		100	100	100	100

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[11] Evans, Gaudet: La lecture de bandes dessinées.

[12] Olivier Donnat: *Les pratiques culturelles des français à l'ère du numérique, enquête 2008*. Paris: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, La Découverte, 2009.

Table 3. Types of comics liked or not according to qualification levels, sample of the actuals readers of comic books (n = 2459), results in %, Survey TPO/BPI, 2011. The grey cells indicate a statistical link between one part of the sample and a characteristic from the table, determined by the PEM (percentage of maximum deviation).[13]

We can observe a relative diploma-related hierarchy among the readers. Graphic novels clearly attract readers of at least Master's degree level (fifty-three percent declare liking them) as opposed to readers who have no diploma or one lower than the A level (fifty-eight percent declare not liking them). Also, forty-one percent of those holding a bachelor's degree in art or science like reading mangas, while seventy-three percent of the people having masters or PhD do not like them. Finally, fifty-seven percent of the people with no diploma or with one lower than the A level prefer superhero comics and funnies, while only forty-nine percent of people having A levels express such a like. Although there are significant differences regarding educational qualifications, the differences are not very important. We need to observe the three types of comics one by one to verify the validity of these figures, not only considering what people said they liked but also taking into account what they said they had read.

Diploma does not appear very discriminating regarding the reading of graphic novels in the year of the survey. But among the men surveyed, a difference emerges when we consider data collected for the twelve previous months as well as data collected for those who declared they liked graphic novels. Thirty percent of men with a bachelor's degree in arts and sciences had read graphic novels in the previous twelve months, but only twenty percent of men with no diploma or with a diploma lower than A level had read a graphic novel in that time. Regarding women, for which we find no difference associated with education, we can explain this result by the fact that reading graphic novels related not to the diploma but to the number of books women read. The more they read books, the highest are the odds they read graphic novels.

For superhero comics and funnies, there is an difference between readers with no diploma or with a diploma lower than an A level and readers having higher diplomas. There are forty-three percent in the first category who have read superhero comics and funnies in the year of the survey, and only thirty-seven percent in the second. The most important ratio of these readers can be found among the persons with no diploma (fifty-five percent). This is consistent with the fact that people either like or do not like superheroes. Seventy-one percent of the people with no diploma declared they liked superheroes, while only forty-four percent of those with a bachelor's degree in arts and sciences or a higher diploma reported liking

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[13] For more information: cibois.pagesperso-orange.fr/PEMFevrier2010.ppt

them. Fifty-five percent of people with an A level diploma or a lower degree declared that they appreciated superheroes. Furthermore, if we observe the results for those who read these comics the most, the eighteen to thirty-nine year-olds, we can see that the difference becomes even greater: sixty-five percent of the people with no diploma or with a diploma lower than A level read superhero comics, but only fifty percent of people with a higher diploma read them.

The preference for mangas and other Asian comics is more difficult to consider, because it is also related to playing video games. To explore manga reading, we focused on the population of eighteen to thirty-nine year-olds, eliminating both the younger ones, those who play much, and the older ones, those who play less. Two relations appear clearly. On the one hand, there is a relative opposition between A levels and higher levels. The first category represents the strongest part of those who play video games and read mangas (twenty-nine percent). The second group constitutes more than one third of those who never or rarely play videogames and do not like mangas (thirty-five percent). On the other hand, the biggest part of those who play videogames at least once a week and do not like mangas consists of people with no diploma or a diploma lower than vocational diplomas. Fifty-six percent of these people play at least once a week and do not like mangas. We can conclude that there is a diploma-related effect on whether one likes mangas.

As cautious as we can be with these figures, we have to admit there is a relation between diplomas and preferences in comic art. Certainly, this finding allows an explanation in terms of legitimacy. Qualified readers prefer specific kinds of comics, and they think certain kinds are of better quality (for graphic novels) or worse quality (for mangas and super heroic comics). Thierry Groensteen explains that the name "graphic novel" seeks to introduce a distinction between entertainment comics and more ambitious works, made by real authors, despite the fact that the genre has few real objective qualities to determine what distinguishes a graphic novel. [14] And mangas and superheroes comics are often considered as mass product comics.

However, the legitimacy effects are moderate. If we add the parts of the sample that are affected by these effects, we find that fifty-seven percent of the population of actual readers have their tastes in comics affected, one way or another, by their diplomas. Caution must be exercised, because while eighty-six percent of the higher graduates dislike manga *or* like

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[14] Thierry Groensteen: 'Roman graphique'. In: *Neuvième art,* online journal of the Cité de la bande dessinée et de l'image, September 2012, accessed on 9 September, 2014 on http://neuviemeart.citebd.org/spip.php?article448.

graphic novels only twenty-four percent dislike manga *and* like graphic novels. If the more highly qualified readers (Master and PhD) seem to be those who are the most prejudiced towards manga, taste and distaste do not ever converge. If it is perfectly logical that the most qualified are prone to like graphic novels, it remains unclear why they dislike manga and not superheroes comics.

Age is clearly a factor in comic-book preference among the population of the higher qualified. Within this group, it is thirty-four percent of the thirty to thirty-nine year-old group who declare liking American comics and twenty-nine percent of the fifty to fifty-nine year-olds who declare disliking them. Born in the seventies, those who have a Master's or a PhD and like comics may have been exposed to the superheroes comics, published in France from 1970 to 1998 by the monthly magazine "Strange". The same reasoning can be made concerning the liking of manga. Among the highly qualified readers of comics, there is a real opposition between the eighteen to thirty-nine year old population and the over forty-year-old population. Forty-six percent of the younger set report liking manga, while ninety-one percent of the older set report disliking it. The chart below details these results.

Age/like or dislike manga	18 to 24	25 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 and more
Like	52	47	44	14	4	7
Dislike	48	53	56	86	96	93
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 4: audience liking or not manga according to age, TPO/BPI survey, 2011, (n = 4580), results in %, population of the adults reading comics and highly qualified (n = 202).

The publication of manga began in France in the nineties, but young people had been exposed to Japanese animation through television programs since the end of the eighties, which might explain why fourteen percent of the forty to forty-nine year-old population liked manga. Further, the results show the youngest group is more prone to liking manga. If legitimacy effects can be demonstrated (to the extent they concern graphic novels), they are subject to the age effect, which is related to one's exposure to comics and, therefore, to the history of comics' publication in France. This holds true for superhero comics, mangas and traditional comics.

3. Legitimacy Effects and Legitimacy Apparatus

Comic art appears as a popular art for children. Most of them read it, independently of their parents' socioeconomic class, even if children of a higher class are less likely to read comics

and less more likely to read comics directed toward an adult audience.[15] For adults, the differences are obvious. Even if there is a significant population of passionate people who read all kinds of comics (twenty percent of the readers read at least three types of comics), educational qualification opposes the readers. In this respect, reading comics is not really different from reading books. While there are fewer and fewer readers overall, the higher socioeconomic class reads more comics and above all reads different comics to the lower class.

The field's theory postulates a correspondence between the production of goods and the production of taste. As we have seen, the production of taste in the comics field allows the coexistence of two readerships, one composed of children where few legitimacy-effects can be noted, and one composed of adults where legitimacy effects are clear but far from systematic.

Referring to the legitimacy apparatus as described by Boltanski, some indicators allow us to check the level of legitimacy of the different styles of comics. We do not have enough data to consider all of these indicators, and so we will only examine cultural events, discuss collected and augmented editions, and provide some information concerning awards.

The first festival devoted to comics, the "festival international de la bande dessinée d'Angoulême," was created in 1974.[16] Many festivals have been created since then: Chambery (since 1975), Saint-Malo (1981), Blois (1984), Brignais (1987), Colomiers (1987), Solliers-ville (1989), Boulogne sur mer (1990-2012), Buc (1993), Villefranche sur saône (1993), Perros-Guirec (1994), Bastia (1994), Amiens (1996), Angers (1999), Cluny (1999), Décines (2000), Hérouville Saint Clair (2001), Moulins (2001), Roquebrune (2001-2012), Lorient (2002-2007), Paris (2002-2006), Lexy (2005), Lyon (2006), Caen (2007), Strasbourg (2008), Aix en Provence (2010), Montargis (2010).[17] Interestingly, most of these events seem to be devoted to the traditional French and Belgian comic art. Regarding manga and superheroes comics, exhibitions and congresses are mostly recent developments. *Epitanime*, created in 1994 and dedicated to Japanimation, was the first festival to present manga. *Japan expo*, the most important comics festival dedicated to Asian culture, began in 1999. The *Lille comics festival* (here, the French "*comics*" refers to the American productions) was created in 2006. The *Comic con'*, a multicultural event where comics and manga are presented along

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[15] As we saw, adults of the upper class read more graphic novels, so we can hypothesize that if children of the upper socioeconomic class read more adult comics, it probably results from the influence of their parents.
[16] A first event around the comic art took place a year earlier in Toulouse.
[17] This listing is not exhaustive. Festivals, which are not specifically dedicated to comics have not been listed, neither have the smaller festivals.

with television serials and science fiction, was created in 2007. Beyond the small number of events dedicated to manga and superheroes comics, some of the newly created festivals seem to meet difficulties: *Japanîmes* was created in 2009 but closed in 2013. *Mangacity* (Rennes) was active from 2004 to 2010. While this analysis is consistent with the data concerning the readership, it cannot help us consider the more elitist part, the graphic novel: most of the authors and artists who produce graphic novels produce also traditional comic art and it is difficult to specify why they are invited in festivals.

Numerous festivals give awards and this data has yet to be collected. Nevertheless, one example suggests that superhero comics and mangas are less likely to be considered for awards than other types of comics. In 2013, in the last selection of the festival d'Angoulême, the biggest in France, four mangas, one superhero comic, and one science-fiction comic were nominated in the official selection, among a total of thirty-four publications.[18] Although it is difficult to precisely distinguish a 'graphic novel' from other types of comic cart, we can note that nineteen 'one-shots', only one of which was a manga, were amongst the final selection in the festival d'Angoulême. In 2009, Benoît Mouchard, then artistic director of the event, said: "This year, in the official selection of the festival of Angouleme, the part of graphic novels is more than important. More than half of the comics that compete for the Essentials 2009 or for the Fauve d'Or could be filed in that category."[19] Even if more data is needed to draw a definitive conclusion, it seems possible to argue that fewer American and Japanese comics are nominated for the most prestigious awards while graphic novels appear to be well represented in those same selections.

The same considerations could be made concerning collected and augmented editions, which are still rare for manga and comics but numerous in the case of the French and Belgian productions.[20] Moreover, the collected editions feature mostly the works of French or Belgian artists. A listing from BedeGest, one of the most complete databases of comics in France,

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[18] While these figures appear clear, it is not possible to explain this only by a rejection from the organizers of the event. The small number of mangas and comics in the nominations results evidently from many factors. See the interview of Stéphane Beaujean, one of the three actual organizers. Xavier Fournier: Angoulême/comics. Je t'aime… Moi non plus. In: *Comix Box* 26 (January-February 2014), p.64-67.

[19] "Cette année, dans la sélection officielle du Festival d'Angoulême, la proportion de romans graphiques est plus qu'importante. Plus de la moitié des bandes dessinées qui concourent pour les Essentiels 2009 ou pour le Fauve d'or peut se ranger dans cette catégorie". Olivier Delcroix: Angoulême à la page du roman graphique!. In: Blog of the journal *Le Figaro,* 30 janvier 2009, accessed on 9 September, 2014 on http://blog.lefigaro.fr/bd/2009/01/angouleme-a-la-page-du-roman-g.html.

[20] For instance, the publishers specialized in the deluxe editions, such as *La parenthèse* or tirages-limites.fr, do not publish many superhero comics or mangas. Most of the "tirages de tête", limited and specifically augmented editions of previously unpublished books, concern French and Belgian comics. See, for example, http://www.bdfugue.com/tirages-de-tete.

demonstrates that, of the ninety-seven series published in collected editions, sixty-eight percent are French or Belgian, twenty-six percent are American, and six percent are from Japan.[21] But the popularity of these series is also clearly related to the age of the readership as the following chart suggests.

Origin of the collected editions / Type of audience	French or Belgian		American		Japanese	
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
Youth audience	52	79	18	72	5	83
Adult audience	6	9	1	4	0	0
All audience	8	12	6	24	1	17
Total	66	100	25	100	6	100

Table 5: Type of audience according to geographical origin of the comics, research on the database BedeGest.

So, if few superhero comics and mangas are republished in collected editions, which confirms their weak legitimacy, we have to consider the fact that most of the French and Belgian stories republished in collected editions were, in fact, published for the first time many years ago. While this confirms the legitimacy of the French and Belgian comic art, the weak presence of mangas in collected editions is probably linked to the fact that these comics really began to appear in France in the 1990s. As a consequence, it is not possible to draw a final conclusion about the legitimacy of Japanese comics. Superhero comics have been widely published in France since the 1960s, and this longevity partially explains their bigger presence in collected editions and confirms their weaker legitimacy.

To conclude with the legitimacy apparatus, while the above data seems to confirm Luc Boltanski's observation in 1975 that comics were an art growing in legitimacy, we have seen that the indicators of legitimacy are not precise enough to distinguish what kind of comic is really legitimate. On the one hand, some festivals have an educational dimension with a substantial part of their activities targeted towards children. On the other hand, some festivals are more legitimate than others. The existence of festivals in itself is not enough to postulate the broad legitimacy of comic art. Likewise, if the existence of awards allows one to think that the works distinguished attain a form of legitimacy, we have to study more precisely to what extent the selection of nominees is representative of the comics published. Finally, the augmented and collected editions are but one part of the process of legitimation. The

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[21] The site lists 122 series published in collected editions. Once the doubles and non-relevant series (for instance the French history in comics) were eliminated, the series were sorted according to origins and audiences. The type of audience was determined by considering the first publisher. The comics published in strips in papers, for instance, are considered all public. French or Belgian comics are filed according to their first publication, in adult or youth magazines, mangas according to their denomination (sônen, seinen, etc.), etc.

publishing history and the financial resources of the audience must be considered before one can authentically demonstrate attained legitimacy. This brief examination therefore shows the efficiency of the indicators as well as their limitations.

Conclusion

The data analysed in this paper show the coexistence of two readerships that are significantly separated by a modest form of legitimacy, which affects adults of higher educational levels more than others. Therefore, the legitimacy theory can be applied to comic-book art and at the same time cannot entirely explain the variety of the readers' behaviours. Furthermore, we can see a true convergence amongst the media which eases the development of the taste for comic art. Videogames and cartoons contribute to the initiation of children to comics, and some works are now adapted for other arts, including theatre and film. The convergence of these different forms of production is not new. Most of the artists are not and have not only been dedicated to the comic art. Many of them have worked and still work for illustration, videogames, cartoons, storyboards, and other media. Some of them have done different works in elitist and popular fields. For instance, the late Jean Giraud (Moebius) was known for his very popular comic, *The Adventures of Lieutenant Blueberry*, but also for more difficult works, such as *Arzach*. It seems therefore more and more difficult to separate some authors or works from the mass and, from their characteristics, to develop the idea of a legitimacy of comic art.

Beyond the authors themselves, the audience is not composed of children only (albeit they are the biggest part of the readership), and there are comics dedicated to adults as well as children. What characterizes comic art is the coexistence of the elitist and popular dimensions. Luc Boltanski had aptly observed these dimensions, noting that if a new audience seemed to appear, comic art did not lose its traditional audience. But he could not, at that precise moment, predict the impact of the transmediatic capacities of the comic art. The transferability across media, of comics, cartoons or videogames - to mention only the most important - increases the potential audience of these products. Changes in the transmission of taste for comic art, which has shifted from the family to television and possibly other media relayed by peers, reduce the effects of legitimacy for children. The socializing role of the parents seems to have less impact, as confrontations with various

significant others (in the sociological sense) become more frequent.[22] Therefore the socioeconomic characteristic of taste seems only to emerge (and not strongly) for the children of the upper classes, which echoes the legitimacy effects on the highly qualified adult readership.

If the global effects of socioeconomic classes cannot be denied (avid comics readers are also avid books readers, and avid readers of books are mostly part of the upper classes), these effects have to be weighed against other variables. The historical building of the field itself deserves more attention, and the complex criteria establishing cultural legitimacy have to be analysed carefully. As the convergence of many media outlets shows, this field and these criteria may have to be enlarged to better describe the cultural practices of comic readers. While we do not deny the efficiency of the field theory, the perimeter of the field has to be carefully defined, especially when it shows a weak autonomy, as is the case for comic art in particular and, probably, for popular culture in general.

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[22] Bernard Lahire: *La culture des individus, dissonances culturelles et distinction de soi*. Paris: La Découverte, 2004.