

Chronicles of Teen Participants From
The Leave Out Violence (LOVE) Photojournalism Project

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Abstract

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Chronicles of Teen Participants From The Leave Out Violence Photojournalism Project

The field of art education has long recognized the immense potential for both personal and social transformation that can be realized through the practice, teaching and learning of art. In this qualitative study, the personal lived experience of ten former Photojournalism Project participants is investigated using an interdisciplinary conceptual framework. This study is informed by my personal experience as co-founder and photography teacher of the Leave Out Violence (LOVE) Photojournalism Project started in 1995 at Dawson College in Montreal. This after-school project teaches photojournalism to adolescents, many of whom are labeled as being “at-risk,” and whose lives have been affected by violence. Engaging in photography and writing, the participants explore and document the issues surrounding violence in their lives and in their community.

Drawing on the fields of art education, critical and social pedagogy, adolescent development and qualitative research, the lives of the teens are examined with the goal of understanding how involvement in a community-based arts project can play a significant role in shaping the fragile lives of teens as well shaping the photographs they produce while actively involved in such a project.

In order to gather data the methodology combined case study and

image-based research methods. A series of three audio-taped interviews were conducted. The first and third interviews focused on the personal lives of the teens. The themes pursued in these interviews centered on family life, community, peer world and school. Participants were asked to recall their lives up to and including their participation in the Photojournalism Project. As well, the issues surrounding whether or not links could be found between media violence and youth violence were also explored. The second interview relied on photo elicitation. The study participants were asked to review their photographs taken during their participation in the LOVE project and to comment on their participation in the project. The photo elicitation technique produced the visual component of the study.

Findings to this study reveal that while there may be no quick solutions to the problem of being an "at-risk" youth affected by violence, a community-based project can offer a brief respite, in a safe and secure learning environment that helps to reduce the long-term negative consequences of experiencing violence allowing them to go on and have meaningful lives.

DEDICATION

This Ph.D Dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Clifton Ruggles whose vision and compassion for young people inspired me to get involved and make a difference.

To my children Jesse, Adam and Katye.
Hoping that you will also be inspired to get involved and make a difference.

Peace, Love & Happiness

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To all my family and friends who have witnessed my commitment to life-long learning.

And of course, thanks to all the wonderful people I have met in the LOVE community starting with LOVE Founder and Fairy Godmother Twinkle, my Photojournalism Co-founder Brenda Zosky Proulx, and the late Harry Hopmeyer. From the beginning we realized we were onto something very special and who would have known back then how many lives we would touch.

Last, but not least, thanks to all the LOVE youth I have had the pleasure of knowing for allowing me into their lives and trying to make this a better world without violence to live in for all.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: The Story of Leave Out Violence (LOVE)

In a very real sense, the surging water in an ocean does not move, rather, energy moves through it. In this same sense, the energy of violence, moves through our culture. Some experience it as a light but unpleasant breeze, easy to tolerate. Others are destroyed by it, as if by a hurricane. But nobody – nobody is untouched (de Becker 8).

This introduction highlights some of the main features and characteristics in the design and implementation of the Leave Out Violence (LOVE) Photojournalism Project. These features and characteristics help to form a contextual, as well as conceptual and theoretical foundation for this research study.

The seeds for this dissertation were sown one autumn evening nearly thirty-five years ago when the lives of one fourteen year-old runaway and one family became inextricably linked. Daniel Rudberg and his wife Sheila (Twinkle) were out that night on their way to downtown Montreal to meet some friends for dinner when they witnessed a teenage boy accosting a senior citizen on the city street. Daniel immediately pulled over and left his vehicle to assist the victim. Once assured that she was all right he turned his attention to the perpetrator and chased the teenager, eventually cornering him in a nearby parking lot not far from where the crime had taken place. It was at this moment that the cornered teen pulled a knife and fatally wounded Daniel Rudberg. As a result of this tragedy, Twinkle was left to raise her young family, manage the family business, and, ultimately, learn to cope with the incident that had changed her and her family's lives forever.

As the years passed, Twinkle reflected on the incident. She began to realize that not only were she and her family victims of this senseless, violent crime, but so was the teenaged boy who carried out the act of murder. During his trial, it was revealed that he had run away from the United States and made his way to Montreal. Growing up, the boy had frequently been left alone by his hard working, single mother. For the most part, his life consisted of being involved in gangs, taking drugs and spending countless hours watching violent movies. Upon his arrival in Montreal, he continued to live an alienated and disenfranchised lifestyle, which is typical for so many young people in our communities today. Essentially, the gangs, drugs and the violent media he watched became the surrogate family and community he turned to for support and guidance.

In 1993, on the twentieth anniversary of her husband's death, Twinkle started Leave Out Violence (LOVE), a community-based organization dedicated to reducing media violence and raising awareness about the effect it has on the psyche of our young people. She organized a LOVE Speaker's Bureau that organized and held meetings in schools and church basements and brought together various community members to discuss and speak out against violence in the media. She also went to California and sat in on hearings dealing with the issue of media violence. However, Twinkle quickly became frustrated with the time and energy she was spending on her efforts to fight the big, Hollywood machine that makes so much money from the violence it glorifies.

In the autumn of 1994, Clifton Ruggles introduced me to both LOVE founder Twinkle Rudberg and my future Photojournalism Project co-founder Brenda Zosky Proulx. Clifton was a gifted special education teacher in the Montreal public school system. He was also a writer, painter, and community activist who realized that it was important that community members provide

support to young people who were considered to be at-risk with their studies and in their personal lives. Clifton fully recognized that all young people, especially those marginalized for socio-economic reasons, deserve opportunities that allow them to grow and make positive contributions to society. Brenda was an instructor in the Journalism Department at Concordia University and had been a long time champion of child rights during her journalism career with the Toronto Star and The Montreal Gazette. At the time of our introduction, Brenda was teaching a course about diversity in the media that explored how various segments of society are either under-represented or misrepresented in the media. One of the groups studied in the course was teenagers whose issues were found to be largely ignored by the media unless one of them committed a serious crime. Even when incidents of youth violence began to increase and were widely covered by the media, the underlying concerns of teenagers, which might have shed more light on the root social causes, were rarely given. Brenda recognized the positive benefits to them expressing their feelings and ideas about the causes and impact of violence in their communities.

By this time I had already researched and become familiar with the extensive alternative school network in Montreal. I knew that these schools were largely populated by so-called at-risk teens. I began teaching photography to these teens in an after-school course called Discovering Photography at the Dawson Institute of Photography at Dawson College in Montreal where I worked. I found that teenagers welcomed the opportunity for self-expression through photography. Their experience resonated with my own; as a teenager, my involvement with creative arts opened up a whole new way of self-expression at a time when having a voice went a long way towards defining who I was, not only to myself, but to my family, friends, and community.

Sharing a common vision, Twinkle, Brenda, Clifton and I, in November of 1994, reached out to a variety of supportive community members and created a community-based media arts program that would connect to teenagers whose lives had been affected by violence. This enabled us to launch, in January 1995, the LOVE Photojournalism Project. We started with fifteen teens who were referred to us by a variety of community sources, such as teachers, guidance counselors, social service agencies and police services. All the Photojournalism Project participants had experienced some form of violence in their lives, either as perpetrators, witnesses and/or victims of acts of violence. The teens met twice a week in the safe learning environment of the photography facilities at Dawson College to learn both photography and journalism. Once given cameras and film, pens and paper, they were encouraged to explore and document their own personal experience with violence and report on the issues surrounding youth violence in the community. They documented these struggles using their newly acquired photojournalism skills.

In June 1995, the collected images and writings of the teens were exhibited publicly for the first time at Dawson College. When the Photojournalism Project started it was, at its simplest, an after-school, community-based media-arts project dedicated to giving a voice to young people. The works shown in the exhibit proved to be not only a means of self-expression for the teens, but also a creative and inspirational form of public art and social intervention, which raised the community's awareness about violence in the world and how it was affecting the lives of teenagers in the community.

Since the focus of this study is on the Photojournalism Project participants, I will outline the criteria for the recruitment and intake process that led to the selection of a youth into the organization. There were three main criteria that

were required for selection into the Photojournalism Project. First, the teen participants selected were usually between 12 and 17-years-old and they were either witnesses, perpetrators, and/or victims of acts of violence. Second, they had to be registered in school. When a young person is not in school, the first question I always ask is, "Why not?" More often than not, a young person who is not in school has a plethora of behavioral or learning problems that cannot be addressed in an after-school program such as the Photojournalism Project, which has neither the time nor the resources to thoroughly deal with these issues. The third requirement for selection was that a member of the community, such as a teacher, social worker or guidance counselor must refer the potential candidate. This was done to ensure that a potential participant's case history was known in advance. It would be necessary to confirm that he or she had experienced some violence in his or her life, had a willingness to learn, and lastly, was able to function and contribute positively in a group setting.

The Photojournalism Project has always strived to provide a secure environment, paving the way for the participants to have a successful learning experience and acquire the skills necessary to work through the issues surrounding the violence in their own lives. The various community referral sources provided maximum support for the young people who needed it. Each of the criteria used in the intake process played a significant role in shaping both the personal experience each participant had within the Photojournalism Project as well as in shaping the dynamics of the Photojournalism Project itself.

The size of each group ranged between 12 to 18 youth. The makeup of each group recruited into the Photojournalism Project has always been a key component in its dynamics. By having a mixture of teens whose lives have been touched in different ways by violence, there is a unique catalyst where

discussion, story telling, writing, and photography fuels and enriches each participant's learning experience, exposing them to a variety of personal histories with violence within the group. As an example, I can remember one youth who bragged about his perpetrated acts of violence until one day, a girl who had been a victim of an act of violence stood up and expressed her feelings about her experience. The sharing of her experience as a victim increased his awareness of what it was like to be a victim of violence. Also, by selecting teens from different schools, the group was a mixture of students representing different socio-economic backgrounds, which helped to break down the cliques that are such a powerful influence within the teen world and often become a cause of violence amongst teens.

During the admissions interview process, Brenda and I asked for general biographical information and also asked potential candidates why they wanted to join the group. We checked to make sure that there weren't any conflicting, or too many after-school activities, verified whether or not the candidate had any previous experience with violence and asked them if they had previous interest or experience in writing or photography. I always felt that any youth who actually bothered to show up for the interview at the Dawson College campus indicated to me that they not only wanted to learn photography and writing but, more importantly, wanted to change his or her life and make a positive contribution to the community. The interview and final selection of the candidates helped to create a sense of excitement about being chosen to participate in a project that not everybody gets accepted into. As one youth exclaimed after being told of her selection over the telephone, "I can't believe it. Finally somebody sees that I am worth something."

The community became an essential part of the Photojournalism Project.

Several volunteers from the community were invited to assist and participate in the Photojournalism Project sessions. Some of the volunteers were graduate students from the Department of Journalism at Concordia University and others were photography students from both Concordia and Dawson College. We invited professional writers and photographers who would show their work and talk about their careers. Business people would also come to the sessions to interact with the teens. Our goal was to provide a variety of community role models to show the participants that there are people who care enough about them to drop in and talk to them informally about their personal lives and activities. These connections helped the teens to become more trusting of adults and gradually change their perceptions about the community around them. In a sense, they began to understand that change is possible, especially when a group of people form a community and decide to make change.

As the photography instructor, I embarked on this challenge with the intention of teaching the teen participants basic skills in taking pictures and learning black and white darkroom techniques. As each teen participant joined the Photojournalism Project, they were given a camera to use and keep with them at all times. In order to give each teen a camera, we chose to supply them with simple point-and-shoot film cameras. This positive gesture conveyed to the youth that they were involved in something special and that the trust shown by us was also to be met with certain expectations. I realized that “doing” would become a sort of mantra for survival in an after-school project like this. I wanted them to quickly start taking pictures and learn to develop their film. The simplicity of the automatic point-and-shoot cameras made this learning process much easier. I said, “Here’s a camera, here’s some film so now let’s start taking pictures. The pictures should be real. Keep your camera with you all the time and look for

shots in your neighborhood or where you hang out. Think of the things that cause violence but also to think of the things we need as people to stop violence.” I showed them how to develop the black and white film using the photo chemicals in the lab, how to make contact sheets from their developed negatives and finally, how to make enlargements from their negatives. The excitement and satisfaction gained from this step-by-step process cannot be underestimated as they succeeded in completing an entire creative process, which for many was the first time in their lives they had met with success and recognition in an art-making activity. I used to remind them that the skills they were acquiring were the same skills taught in a first-year college photography program. By observing and working alongside the other young photo students in the photo labs, I hoped that they would reflect on their personal lives and realize that it was quite possible for them to become college students one day. Over the years, several LOVE youth have enrolled at colleges and universities sparked by their experience in the Photojournalism Project.

As for Photojournalism Project co-founder Brenda Zosky Proulx, her challenge was to get these young people to “report” about their lives. They became reporters of events related to violence in their lives and in the community. Brenda told them “Tell us, tell the community what you think the real issues surrounding youth violence are. Tell us the truth about what is really going on in your world through your own stories.” The only rules about their writing was that, as reporters on the issue of youth violence, their stories had to be true and accurate and that they had to have something about the causes, or the impact, or the prevention of violence. They were also given LOVE press passes and Dawson College ID cards, which gave them the confidence to go out in the community and become reporters. The onus was put on them to get the stories

out. Photojournalism proved to be the right vehicle to engage them because it allowed them to become part of the media that young people are so immersed in.

Twinkle Rudberg's example of forgiveness and the idea that good can come from bad permeates the LOVE story. The young people who were familiar with Twinkle and her story came to feel a certain admiration for this lady who turned her tragic life experience into a positive one through forgiveness, thereby helping young people to avoid acts of violence. It is in her story that we realize that violence has no boundaries and that we are all victims of violence.

Now LOVE has grown into an international youth organization with young people involved in centers in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Halifax, and New York City. Their photos and text have been collected in a major traveling exhibit that has been seen in a variety of places in Canada and the United States. One highlight was a major exhibit of Photojournalism work that was on view at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Montreal during the summer of 2002. Since then, there have been showings at the Canadian Consulate at the Rockefeller Center in New York City in 2004, the Xerox Center in Montreal in 2005, and most recently the Visual Arts Centre in Westmount, Quebec in June, 2007. The Photojournalism Project also publishes a community newspaper called "One LOVE" twice a year featuring photos and writing. The LOVE youth also have collections of their work published in three books, *Loveworks!* (1998), *The Courage To Change* (2001) and *L'art de vivre sans violence* (2002).

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

There is an abundance of literature in the field of art education about the positive benefits of including art in school curriculums and about the teaching and learning process this entails. There has been much less written, however, about the personal experience of being a community art teacher, like myself, whose teaching practice emanates from a personal feeling of social responsibility and a desire to make social change.

In order to broaden my understanding of my role as the photography teacher for the Photojournalism Project, I examined a variety of studies and literature that reflected the diversity of my teaching experience. This review of literature is, therefore, interdisciplinary in nature. In the first section of this chapter, I examine the links established between community and art education, as well as attempt to describe the role of the community art teacher in a community-based setting. Next, I review critical and social pedagogies as an effective approach to teaching and learning when dealing with sensitive social issues in the classroom. Then, I discuss literature that brings about a better understanding of adolescent development and at-risk youth. Finally, I scrutinize the issues surrounding media and the role it plays in youth violence.

2.1 Community and Art Education

For the purposes of this study, it is important to begin this review of literature by looking at the concept of community and its role in art education. As Minar & Greer pointed out “the concept of community is a complex, usually unanalyzed, abstraction. It is often a source of confusion for it stands for many things, and when it is used with interchangeable meanings, very elementary errors creep into our discourse” (ix).

It is American educational philosopher John Dewey who recognized the important links between community and education as well as their impact on teaching and learning in the field of art education. Several other elements of Dewey's educational philosophy can be linked to both the Photojournalism Project and this study. However, his notion of community is, without exception, the most important. As early as 1899, Dewey recognized the link between education and community. As Milbrandt noted:

The connection between society and education is found early in general education in the work of John Dewey (1899) when he questioned whether the role of education was a function of society, or if society was a function of education. Dewey suggested that rather than schools reproducing the interests and value of the dominant culture, schools should promote democracy by providing an emancipatory approach to learning (142).

Later, in *Art as Experience* Dewey presented a comprehensive look at the role of art in our everyday lives, urging that art be brought closer to the everyday human experience, again exploring the links between society, community, education and art.

Chapman reasserts that at the heart of Dewey's educational philosophy is the belief that "the school is a microcosm of everyday life. It functions as a small community facing its own problems and finding solutions through cooperative effort and democratic procedures (13)."

Looking further into existing art education literature, I found that the call for socially relevant art making has long been a subject for discussion. Bersson argued that the art education approaches of the time lacked social relevance and de-emphasized art's societal roots and its power as a pervasive social force that shapes our most basic attitudes, beliefs, values, and behavior. Baker similarly echoed that art educators must find ways to make our practices better match the

beliefs, values, and behaviors that form the communities in which we teach, and better shape the behaviors of those we teach in them. Baker went on to say that students,

are essentially shaped, defined, and defended by the communities in which they live and learn...(T)he conditions kids place on any instructional strategy they confront –simply echo the ideas, values, beliefs, and behaviors they continually learn from family, friends, and neighbors in their given communities...Their learning conditions are community based...Indeed, shared differences and similarities are what communities are about (44).

The link between community and art education was staunchly supported again by May who asserted that:

As long as any of us are in pain or are silenced, we are collectively responsible. A community discloses and anchors individual interests, concerns, and problems of practice. A community both requires and frees us to speak and to act in a more reasonable, compassionate way toward more socially responsible, responsive ends (138).

In order to further describe and clarify the nature and function of the community art teacher, I found it necessary to delve into some urban education literature where there is also an attempt to shed light on the role of the community teacher. Murrell suggested that, “community teachers see themselves as change agents...They see education as the key to success for the young people whom they serve. Most articulate a sense of commitment to their community—a sense of ‘giving back’” (3).

There have been other community arts-based projects that address social issues with alienated or marginalized community members. A few of them share a similar philosophical orientation or approach as the Photojournalism Project, such as the *Shooting Back* project (Hubbard; Carroad). This Washington, D.C.

based project grew out of photojournalist Jim Hubbard's work documenting life in homeless shelters in the D.C. area. A center was set up to conduct photographic workshops for at-risk youth from the area. A book documenting the project was published in 1991. Dunn & Leeson reported on the *Changing Places* project created in an East London neighborhood that involved working with culturally diverse youth during a period of high racial tension. The project explored issues of culture and identity, commonality and difference using public billboards as a means of expression. Mullen described an implementation process that uses as its conceptual basis a "reaching inside out" principle as a means of delivery in an arts-based educational program for incarcerated females in rural Florida. At the other end of the spectrum Long & Soble presented a six-week violence prevention project for sixth grade public school students in Northern California. They stated, "The objective outcome was to give students an enriched, hands-on educational experience in which to identify and explore the effects of violence in their personal and community lives"(329). Krensky wrote about a collaborative project between a public middle school and a community-based arts organization that involved researching, designing and implementing a youth-created Peace Park—a public art and playground space. This project used a combination of social responsibility education and arts education that provided "an effective educational approach to promote social responsibility education and art education, and democratic participation" (4).

Most recently, I have corresponded with Martin Thiele and Sally Marsden who established the *Artful Dodgers Studio*, a Jesuit social services program in Melbourne, Australia. According to Thiele & Marsden, "this inner city art studio uses a community cultural development methodology to provide opportunities for extremely complex young people to participate in quality artistic projects and to

engage in positive dialogue with the community as artists”(1). In sharing thoughts about the nature of the work we have been doing on our respective projects, I agreed with Thiele and Marsden that there are no short-term solutions to solving some of the problems and issues that arise when working with disenfranchised or marginalized populations and that long term funding for arts-based community work has been virtually non-existent. We felt that one way to address this issue would be to have studies funded that focused on the long-term benefits for project participants who are involved for longer periods of time (say three to five years) in a community-based project.

2.2 Critical and Social Pedagogy

In the article *Why Do We Teach Art Today?*, Siegesmund noted that as a discipline, art education has always fielded questions about the value of teaching and learning art in schools. Efland divided the literature that discussed the value of teaching art into three groupings or, “streams of influence”. He named them the expressionist, the reconstructivist, and the scientific rationalist. My teaching practice follows in the reconstructivist stream where, according to Siegesmund (1998) “art, culture, and creative expression are powerful agents in shaping educational outcomes. Art education is a tool for historical and moral instruction capable of transforming individuals and society. Art education is explicitly placed in the service of social transformation” (201).

My response to the challenge of teaching photography to teens whose personal lives had been affected by violence was to embrace some of the social pedagogy and teaching philosophy put forth by Brazilian educator Paulo Friere and to put it into my teaching practice. Friere wrote:

To be a good liberating educator you need above all to have faith in human beings. You need to love. You must be convinced that the

fundamental effort of education is to help the liberation of people, never their domestication. You must be convinced that when people reflect on their domination they begin a first step in changing their relationship to the world (62).

A critical pedagogy approach was also blended into the Photojournalism Project whereby the teaching and learning experience for all participants, including myself, was acquired through a process of reflection, critical thinking and perspective transformation. bell hooks, herself a practitioner of the Freirean philosophy uses a transformative pedagogy approach in the classroom on which she notes:

What we all ideally share is the desire to learn—to receive actively knowledge that enhances our intellectual development and our capacity to live more fully in the world. It has been my experience that one way to build community in the classroom is to recognize the value of each individual voice (40).

bell hook's vision of creating a classroom that is community-oriented and values each individual's voice and participation echoes what Shor noted about Friere's notion of creating "the liberating classroom where teachers pose problems derived from student life, social issues, and academic subjects, in mutually created dialogue" (25).

Fusing the critical and social pedagogy approach into the Photojournalism Project created a very collaborative learning experience based on the understanding that everybody can contribute to making social change.

Building upon this notion of personal transformation, critical thinking was also implemented into the teaching and learning component of the Photojournalism Project. Brookfield (1987) described critical thinking this way:

critical thinking involves calling into question the assumptions underlying

our customary, habitual ways of thinking and acting and then being able to think and act differently on the basis of this critical questioning. Being a critical thinker is part of what it means to be a developing person and fostering critical thinking is crucial to creating and maintaining a healthy democracy (1).

As an example of this, the participants were asked to pursue their photojournalism practice with an increased awareness that they were now becoming media producers, rather than consumers, and that with this comes the need to better understand the personal transformation that has come about. The opportunity to create exhibits, newspapers, and books gave the teen participants the voice they sorely needed. They embraced the learning experience that began to take place in a more open, collaborative setting and, as Mezirow claimed:

the recognition of a personal perspective transformation underscores an appreciation of the relationship that evolves through learning. Learning is defined as the “process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action” (167).

A critical and social pedagogy approach, when infused into an arts-based curriculum, can provide a powerful tool for social change in the classroom. Giroux, Lacy, Bowen, and Green have all recognized the potential for transformative and positive teaching and learning experiences acquired through art-making activities that are oriented towards a critical and social pedagogy. Kretzmann and McKnight said about society’s perception of youth that “the unique energy and creativity of youth is often denied to the community because the young people of the neighborhood are all too often viewed in terms of their lack of maturity and practical life experience” (29). Many of the LOVE teen participants developed a renewed interest in art making and appreciated the opportunity to be given a voice and means of self-expression through the

Photojournalism Project. The rejuvenation of their artistic skills through photojournalism came at a time when typically, as Pariser suggested, “early adolescence is the graveyard of artistic activity” (124). By embracing a social and critical pedagogy approach, an educator creates a learning environment that opens up new pathways to learning. During some of this transformative process, it may be necessary to confront and resolve some very sensitive and deeply personal issues that may arise amongst students. Students may in fact be uncomfortable and resist and deny knowledge about some of these realities and truths, especially those that touch closely on their personal lives.

Britzman initially coined the term “difficult knowledge” which Cohen-Evron (2005), reintroduced in her study of six art teachers who taught in Israel under constant violent conflict. The term describes “information that students (and teachers) resist because it causes them to face moral conflict in their own reality. It puts the way they see themselves and everything they learned beforehand at risk” (319). The intense and constant violent living conditions of the Middle East along with the dramatic socio-political implications may be more traumatic and scarring than the violence experienced in North American society; nonetheless, there was a uniquely charged and dynamic learning experience created within the Photojournalism Project.

Another element to recognize in a critical and social pedagogy approach is the role of connection and caring in teaching. Noddings has used the term “ethic of caring” in teaching claiming that “as human beings we want to care and to be cared for. Caring is important in itself” (7). Lin also expounded upon this stating, “caring is more fundamental than justice, fairness, and equity. When people sincerely care about others, they find ways to treat them justly, fairly, and equitably”(4). Davidson demonstrated how an art teacher could adapt an ethic of

caring as a principle ingredient for teaching success in an elementary school setting. Care, dialogue and pleasure in learning were identified as three vital components to achieve connection with her students—the connection with students being paramount to a creating a positive learning experience. Heid and Kelehear recently revisited and reaffirmed the significance of Noddings’s writing when they say that “in true Deweyian style, Noddings asserts that if one loses sight of the children in the classroom because of an emphasis on the discipline and assessment of that discipline, then one has forgotten what matters most” (414).

An important factor often cited as essential in ensuring positive outcomes when working with at-risk youth is the need to build strong relationships between adults and the at-risk youth they serve. Day and Wallach, along with Noam, Winner, Rhein, & Molad, all cited the importance of creating learning environments that support and grow trusting relationships between students and adults. In what he called “relational education”, Pariser outlined several key ingredients necessary for the development of this process, one of which is trust. He claimed

Due to the cataclysmic betrayals and dysfunctions which our students have experienced from the adult world- abuse-neglect, disinterest, they have good cause to be distrustful of adults. They have good cause to expect that the future will bring nothing worth working for because ‘things never work out (3).

It would seem then that a social and critical approach to teaching and learning might best be set up in an alternative educational setting such as the one created in the Photojournalism Project where many of the project participants came from the small, alternative schools we had visited and recruited from in Montreal. In Amherst, Massachusettes, Goldsheider reported on a center, not a school, in

which the enrolled teens are given more of a say in constructing their education in an alternative setting. The learning process is described as “un-schooling”. As Tapscott suggested, the rise in home schooling is a warning that our school systems are not running as well as they should be. Overall, Tapscott claimed, “there is a feeling that, given all the improvements in technology and epistemology, we could be doing much better” (130).

2.3 Adolescent Development

In my career as a photography teacher, I had worked mostly with adult learners in a college setting. I had no previous experience working with at-risk teens affected by violence, but I quickly realized that to be successful with this group of teens, it was necessary to explore some of the literature about adolescent development and at-risk behavior. “Kids have always caused adults worry,” echoed Onstad in her article *The Myth of Youth Crime* reaffirming the notion of the out of control adolescent.

G. Stanley Hall set a tone early on for some of the discussion regarding adolescent behavior during the twentieth century. In his book, *Adolescence*, Hall put forth his “recapitulation theory” of adolescence, a landmark investigation of the teen years that eventually was refuted in academic circles for its rather crude claims that the so-called “terrible teen years” were nothing more than an outgrowth of the savage stage of man’s own natural evolution. As crude as Hall’s theory was, it did begin to articulate some terms for our understanding of youth. Throughout the 20th century, other adolescent theorists put forth ideas regarding the stage of development known as adolescence (Freud, Piaget, and Erikson). All have their merits and have contributed greatly to our understanding of adolescents and adolescent behaviour today.

Also included in this group would be Abraham Maslow whose hierarchy of needs theory examined how to motivate learning in adolescents. In an era where educators always seem to be trying to find new solutions to old problems, Maslow's contributions are often overlooked. His hierarchy of needs was fittingly put into place within the Photojournalism Project as a way of helping to solve some of the questions surrounding how to motivate young people who, like many of the LOVE youth, were labeled as underachievers or "at-risk" youth within their communities and schools. As noted by Biehler and Snowman:

In Maslow's theory of motivation, when individuals have satisfied their lower, or deficiency, needs (physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem), they will feel motivated to satisfy higher growth (or being) needs (self-actualization, knowing and understanding aesthetic)- not because of a deficit but because of a desire to gratify the higher needs (475).

Typically, a Photojournalism Project session would begin after school at four o'clock with a sharing of juice, cookies and Jamaican patties, keeping close to Maslow's theory, which is founded on the notion that a hungry child cannot be motivated to learn. As well, everybody who participated recognized the importance of creating a safe and secure learning environment, which is also an example of implementing one of Maslow's lower deficiency needs in order to ensure a successful learning experience for the teen participants.

About the same time that I became involved with the LOVE organization and the Photojournalism Project, I was introduced to literature from the Harvard Risk and Prevention Program. This program encourages youth and childcare workers, teachers, or any other professional working with youth, to embrace an interdisciplinary approach to educating today's youth at-risk. This program was born of necessity, supporting the claim by Noam, Chandler & Lalonde that,

evidence is accumulating that many adolescents face multiple risks in such diverse settings as the family, (e.g., abuse, neglect, parental discord, and divorce), community (encounters with violence, drug use, and poor health conditions), peer world (e.g., delinquency, truancy, and excessive risk-taking activity), and school environment (lack of resources, lack of adult support, and disorganization) (36).

The four settings (family, community, peer world and school) are the main places where at-risk behavior is most likely to occur and, therefore, helps to provide a conceptual and theoretical framework for my study. These same settings also play major and recurring roles among the youth who joined the Photojournalism Project.

In recognizing the four settings, it should be made clear that they are not necessarily the cause of at-risk behavior amongst adolescents. Rather, it is within these settings that adolescent behavior tends to gravitate towards negative consequences. With the constantly shifting family structure today, we get what Currie so aptly called the “sink or swim” family. In these types of family situations, adolescents are forced to grow up much too fast. Currie believed that the growing-up process occurs far too early for many adolescents and this experience creates feelings of neglect and abandonment. This would include adolescents from all socio-economic backgrounds, even those from middle-class families. Currie claimed that,

it (growing up) happens too early, too drastically and too carelessly. It is not a mindful process in which adults gradually relinquish some responsibility as their children in these families learn to take on but a kind of withdrawal in which the growing child is simply set adrift. (80)

Because of the constantly changing family situations that many young people experience, it happens that a child may be at-risk within their own family. An example of such a situation, as Garbarino pointed out,

is a child who is exposed to a man who is sexually involved with the child's mother but is not biologically related to the child or legally or

socially committed to serve as a surrogate father. This is the “mother’s boyfriend” who appears so disproportionately in reports of child abuse of all kinds (48).

With the fragility of many family structures comes the reminder, as Fine noted, of an increase in the number of minors being placed in the care of the social services system in Canada. “In the past 10 years, the number of minors taken from their families under the auspices of child welfare authorities has jumped to 66,000 from 40,000” (94). The pity, of course, is that for these young people, the stigma and shame attached to this experience is long lasting. Kools, in her study examining the impact of long-term foster care on adolescents, focused on the role of stigmatization which she defined as,

the devaluation of one’s personal identity by others through biased assumptions, descriptions or identification in negative, stereotypical terms, and behavioral expectations and treatment in accordance with these biases or labels. Interactions that are colored by negative stereotypes produce stigma—the mark of social shame... (8)..

Along with the stigma of being a “foster kid”, can also come new threats of violence that occur when teens are placed in foster or group home settings. I recall one girl I met on a school outreach and who was living in a group home related to me, “often it feels like you’re being punished twice. First, you get taken away from your family and then, you get put in a group home which is even more dysfunctional than your own family.”

Throughout the teen years, there is the incredibly powerful influence of the peer world that plays such a dramatic role in the everyday lives of young people. Judith Rich Harris highlighted the important role of the peer world during adolescence in her book *The Nurture Assumption*. For Harris, the teen years, especially for boys, are rife with delinquent behavior because, as she says,

“delinquency is not, by and large something kids do on their own: it is something they do with their friends” (284). She went on to say:

They are conforming to the norms of their group...or doing what it takes to gain status in their group, or doing what it takes to avoid losing status. Want to change them? Then change the norms of their group. Lots of luck... (284)

The personal lived experience of adolescent boys highlights the immense presence of the peer world in their lives. This is not to say that all incidents of youth violence are committed solely by boys, however. But, as pointed out in Kever’s interview with Michael Gurian, author of the book *The Wonder of Boys*, the author claims “girls join gangs, but 90% of gang members are boys. Boys are hungry for the group” (13).

Another example of the commanding presence of the peer world in the daily lives of boys is the existence of “a code of honor”. Pollack described this as being part of the “Boy Code”, where violence in boys “sometimes represents a vain attempt on their part to reconnect with others, to make and keep friends” (335). Canada recounted quite vividly his childhood days growing up among the constant threat of violence in his neighborhood. As the violent confrontations moved from fist, to stick, to knife and finally, a gun, he captures another essence of the “codes of conduct” that are an integral part of the personal lived experience of boys. At one point, the rules Canada says were simple. “Don’t cry. Don’t act afraid. Don’t tell your mother. Take it like a man. Don’t let no one take your manhood” (37). This stance reflects some of the source of concern about boys’ development that starts when they are very young. As Pollack pointed out, “studies show that boys at a very early age are pushed to suppress their vulnerable and sad feelings, they also demonstrate that boys are pressured to

express the one strong feeling allowed them —anger”(44).

Adding even more pressure to the developing adolescent male identity is the notion that boys must learn to take care of themselves. As Ryan suggested:

relying on their own means to deal with the problem (violence) without asking for help from those around them is an expectation we place on males. Asking for help would indicate that they were unable to look after themselves or would imply that they were frightened by the violence. Neither of these choices is very desirable for young males approaching or passing through puberty and acquiring a male gender role which denies them the status of 'victim' (23).

Finally, Nisbett and Cohen claimed that recent research on male violence suggests the existence of a culture of honor amongst males extends into adulthood implying that,

a man establishes his honor by tolerating no challenge or disrespect, responding to insults and threats to his property with threatened or actual violence. Such a code of behavior deters theft and wanton aggression, but it also requires that violence sometimes be employed: disputants cannot be too willing to back down, or honor will be compromised (18).

The presence and impact of both stigmatization and shame is magnified within the adolescent peer world when they extend into the culture of youth violence where their effect cannot be ignored. Dotto noted that recent incidents of school violence seem to involve,

kids who had a long history of being shamed by peers, alienated in a way that made them feel bad about who they were. Adolescents are especially prone to shame, not only because peers are so important but because they're trying to forge an identity. They don't have a stable sense of self, and negative feedback from a teacher or peer can seem like the end of the world (40).

Girls on the other hand seem to be more inclined to subscribe to an ethic of

caring. In her groundbreaking book *In A Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan put forth that, “The moral imperative that emerges in interviews with women is an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the ‘real and recognizable’ trouble of this world” (100). As a result of this overriding moral responsibility for caring, Gilligan said that girls speak with a “different voice” when it comes to processing social issues, often one built on an ethic of caring, a cooperative spirit, and a commitment to emotional connection. Despite the tremendous influence of this notion among girls adolescent development, there has been a noticeable increase in incidents of violence with girls. James Garbarino explores the causes that lead to physical aggression and violence by teenaged girls. He claims that one of the reasons for the increase in violent behaviour has been the shift over-all in the role of women in society today and how this has had an impact on how girls now develop and see their role in society. In essence, there has been quite a noticeable shift in the cultural development of young girls today, which has indirectly or directly led to an increase in girls physical aggression and violent behaviour.

Equally as important as the ethic of caring in girls’ development, Rogers examined the role of courage in adolescent girls and women, focusing on how in early adolescence girls become less confident through the loss of voice and resiliency and must battle throughout their adolescent years trying to recover their lost sense of courage.

In searching how best to work with at-risk youth and be able to provide them with a positive learning experience Dryfoos, in a study of youth crime prevention programs, identified certain elements necessary for working successfully with at-risk youth. Early intervention, one-on-one attention (creative shepherding), developmental appropriateness and youth empowerment were cited. More

recently, Dryfoos listed several of the most frequently mentioned antecedents of high-risk behaviors garnered from several large studies. These antecedents could be helpful identifying which teenagers are at-risk of negative consequences. They are, “early use of drugs or alcohol, alienation and being out of the mainstream, high-risk friends, poverty, lack of support, lack of attachment to adults, low achievement and learning disabilities” (217).

2.4 Media and Youth Violence

The relationship between the media, popular culture and youth violence is always closely scrutinized in the various media outlets whenever a horrifying act of violence involving young people is committed. Furthermore, as Giroux said that,

within the dominating mass media culture, youth are being constructed differently within a popular culture that is both oppressive and resistant, filled with democratic possibilities and yet deadly serious in representing violence as a legitimate practice to define one’s identity and negotiate the terrain of everyday life. (12).

In sharing this view about popular culture and more specifically rap music, Ostroff pointed out that the problem of gangsta rap music lies in its marketing of a death-wish mentality that specifically targets middle-class black youth and white suburbanites and which “affect the world views of young listeners at a critical time in their lives, especially when sold under the guise of ‘keeping it real’” (A17).

Public perceptions of youth and how they have been represented in the media has led us to believe that teens are more out of control now than ever. This is belief that started in the fifties with movies like *Rebel Without A Cause* and continues today whenever violent incidents involving young people occur.

However, Onstad says that “lost in the media coverage and in the sea of pop-culture images is the fact that there is little evidence that kids today are any worse than kids five or twenty-five years ago” (48).

In *Tough Guise*, a documentary film that explores the connections in society between masculinity, male violence and the influence of the media, film narrator Jackson Katz described “tough guise” as “the front that so many men put up that’s based on an extreme notion of masculinity that emphasizes toughness and physical strength and getting the respect and admiration of others through violence or the implicit threat of it”. More significant is the fact that much of this code of behavior is learned by and through the powerful and profit-making violent imagery and representations in the mass media.

The research into the effects of the media on young people began to proliferate in the 60s with the rise and influence of the television and movies in western society. As an example, the assessment made by three leading researchers at the time led to this general conclusion:

For some children, under some conditions, some television is harmful. For other children under the same conditions, or for the same children under other conditions it may be beneficial. For most children, under most conditions, most television is probably neither particularly harmful nor particularly beneficial (Schramm, Lyle, & Parker 1).

Their conclusion has not changed significantly since it was first put forward. The 1961 study makes a strong case as to how hard it is to come up with firm links between the media and youth violence. There are still questions almost 50 years later. Some of the reasons for pinpointing the effects of media violence may lie in the fact, as Siegel so perceptively pointed out is that, for the most part, many of the literally hundreds of investigations conducted have measured the effects of media violence over a short period of time. Using television as an

example, Siegel said, “TV violence may have effects more like corrosion than explosion. The effects may be subtle and continuous, chronic rather than acute, insidious rather than blatantly overt...If so, short-term experiments will not reveal the full measure of the effects” (236).

The late Neil Postman, in his book *The Disappearance of Childhood*, suggested that more than anything else, the cumulative exposure to media violence has helped to erode the lines that were seemingly so clearly drawn between childhood and adulthood years. In fact, Postman suggests that perhaps researchers are not asking the right question in an attempt to understand the effects of media violence on young people. He pointed out that the focus should be more on trying to understand how media violence undermines young people’s faith in the adult world’s abilities to control random and impulsive acts of violence and lessens their hopes for a better future for the world.

Chapter 3: The Method

3.0 Introduction

One of the primary strengths in doing qualitative research is its process-oriented nature. As a result, the greatest potential for understanding often comes from exploring and investigating the process (or journey). As Merriam stated:

As a qualitative researcher the key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting within their social worlds. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in their world (6).

Like a wide-angle lens, I have set out to capture and describe the personal lived experience of each of the former participants and their personal journey into and participation in the Photojournalism Project. In an attempt to better understand the long-term benefits of young people being involved in a community-based project such as the Photojournalism Project, I asked several questions related to the personal journeys of the participants selected for the study:

What motivated these teens to be participants in the Photojournalism Project?

What did they actually do and produce during their participation?

What, if any, elements can be identified and described that made participation in the Photojournalism Project a positive life experience?

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Qualitative Inquiry

In this section, I describe some of the basic characteristics of qualitative research that form the conceptual framework for the study. In particular, I will

examine the longitudinal case study and image-based research methods that were instrumental in producing the data necessary for the study.

Because I have taught photography to LOVE teens for nearly 10 years in a community based setting, I have had an opportunity to pursue a longitudinal research study. Ruspini shed light on the potential of longitudinal studies in qualitative research and wrote the following:

retrospective longitudinal studies (event history or duration data) in which interviewees are asked to remember, and to reconstruct events, and aspects of their own life-courses. The value of longitudinal studies in qualitative research is that they can uniquely capture the true nature of phenomena over time (3).

3.1.2 Case Study

For my study, I felt that an understanding of each participant's unique personal life story would evolve best by using the case study method. Richard Yin has contributed immensely to broadening my understanding of case study as a research method. Yin stated that "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident" (13).

Recently Yin (2004) wrote:

One strength of the case study method is its usefulness when phenomenon and context are not readily separable, a condition that occurs in real-life but cannot easily be duplicated by laboratory research. Another strength is that the method enables you, as a social scientist, to address "how" and "why" questions about the real-life events, using a broad variety of empirical tools...(xii).

It is worth noting that there are several other aspects of the case study method that have been brought forward by other researchers that I found to be both significant and useful to consider when conducting this study. Anderson made a link between education and process, claiming the following:

Not all of the traditional methods of educational research lend themselves well to the variety of questions and problems that arise in different educational situations. Education is a process and there is a need for research methods which themselves are process-oriented, flexible, and adaptable to changes in circumstances and an evolving context. For such situations, the case study method is often appropriate (157).

I found that Anderson’s emphasis on flexibility and adaptability fits well with how the Photojournalism Project was designed and implemented. Kuper and Kuper focussed on the action-oriented aspect of case study. For them, “the design and conduct of case study research is responsive and creative, accommodating to the form, rhythm, and possibilities of the setting” (4).

Freedman and Wood described a thematic approach to case study research that “involves a focus on certain themes of research that are either pre-determined or emergent” (33). I decided to use both pre-determined and emergent themes to help me collect, organize and display data. When formulating questions for my

Name	Gender	Age	Present occupation	Ethnic/ racial identification	High School Yes/No	Post Secondary Education Yes/No
Monica	F	20	Accountant excutive	Afro Canadian/American	Yes	Yes
Miguel	M	28	Graphic Designer	hispanic Chilean	Yes	Yes
Jesse	M	26	Video Store Manager	Canadian	Yes	Yes
Charles	M	28	Video Game Tester	Canadian	No	Yes
Joni	F	24	Student	Canadian	Yes	Yes
Kristy	F	24	NGO Work	Native/ French	No	No
Andrew	M	23	Employed	Hispanic/ Paraguay	No	No
Gary	M	25	Employed	Caribbean	No	No
Micheal	M	21	Free Lance photographer	Portuguese	No	No
Kyra	F	21	Student	Bi-racial Canadian	Yes	Yes

three-interview series with the LOVE teens, I used a set of pre-determined themes derived from those used by Funderburg in her study of the personal lives of Biracial Americans in the book *Black, White, and Other*. Some of these themes included identity, family, racism, violence, school, work, relationships, alienation, the law, and community.

3.1.3 Image-based Research

It is at this point that my research methodology blends the longitudinal case study approach with image-based research methods. In the first interview of the three, I followed a more structured qualitative research approach using a phenomenologically-based interviewing technique. In the second interview, photo negatives, contact sheets, photographs and pieces of writing produced by the study participants while in the Photojournalism Project were introduced into the interview process and used to deepen our discussion. Collier and Collier called this image-based research method “photo-interviewing” or “photo elicitation”. Collier noted “that the value of using images in formal and informal interviews is under-appreciated...During direct analysis we can show images to informants and they can identify items, places, people, processes and activities...” (45). In their study, Packard, Ellison, and Sequenzia used photo interviewing as a method to investigate the hopes and fears of urban adolescent girls. They wrote, “We also saw photo-interviewing as the basis for a powerful visual arts project. The arts have been tied to accessibility and communication in education, particularly among young people who would otherwise be considered ‘at-risk‘ for failure” (1).

3.2 Participants

In the winter of 2004, I began to compile my list of potential candidates for

the study. I was in contact with some of the teens because the Photojournalism Project was—and still is—held in the photo labs at Dawson College where I work. Some of the former Photojournalism participants volunteered their time or just dropped in during the sessions. Others had gone on to be students at Dawson College and I would see them in the hallways of the school. I also came into contact with several others at different LOVE activities and events.

Over the course of my decade of teaching teens in the Photojournalism Project, I had worked with nearly three hundred youth in Montreal. I decided to put together a varied and dynamic group who, for the purposes of this study, would be a fair representation or sampling of the type of LOVE youth I have known during my teaching career. When the Photojournalism Project was launched, I realized that there were a variety of personal experiences that brought these young people into the Photojournalism Project and that violence had no boundaries in terms of the lives it can affect. The group chosen for this study reflects that same philosophy: all participants have had some experience with violence and come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds.

Another characteristic or quality I looked for in each potential candidate was continued contact with the project. Each candidate had been actively involved, first, in the Photojournalism Project, and then to a lesser degree in some other LOVE activities such as school outreaches, presentations, the Youth Leadership Camp. All were also essentially giving back to both LOVE and their community. A few of those selected have worked for or are currently on staff with LOVE. Some have been LOVE Youth Leaders or served on LOVE's Montreal Board of Directors. Almost all have or are presently pursuing post-secondary school studies or have gone on to a meaningful work life. I chose these youth on the basis of their diverse backgrounds as well as the ability to articulate their

personal experiences. The following table supplies biographical information about the study participants.

3.3 Sources of Data

The sources of data for my case studies are drawn from audio taped interviews, photo interviewing, and other photos and writing from books and newspapers published by LOVE. I also reviewed several videos about and made by LOVE youth. As well, I reviewed on a regular basis my personal agendas, notes, and all other documentation pertinent to the Photojournalism Project in order to better inform myself about the evolution of the program.

3.3.1 Interviews

I began to build my source of data by conducting interviews with the 10 teens I chose. I used a three interview series which Seidman called phenomenologically based interviewing. This method combines life history interviewing and focused, in-depth interviewing, informed by assumptions drawn from phenomenology. The first interview was designed to gather as much data as possible about the teen's personal lived experience before he or she joined the Photojournalism Project. For the second interview, I introduced the image-based research part of the study that uses photo interviewing as a technique to mine visual data about each participants experience in the Photojournalism Project and to collect the work the participants produced while active in the project. During the second interview, the participants and I reviewed their photojournalism work. Together, we looked at his or her negatives, contact sheets, prints, and some personal writings. If possible, the photos were put in chronological order, and students were asked to choose their favorite photographic images and talk about why they images chose them. The third interview was essentially a wrap up session. We looked once again at photos, or in some cases writing, and we had further discussion about

their past and present lives as well as their hopes, fears, and plans.

3.3.2 Photographic Images

One of the policies in place from the beginning of the Photojournalism Project was that the negatives of the youth participants were ultimately the property of LOVE. This being the case, I had in my possession all of the negatives produced by the LOVE teens from the original group from 1995 through to 2004. The collection proved to be extremely valuable for me in my research. The collection included their 35mm black and white film negatives, contact sheets, and an assortment of black and white enlargements they had produced while active in the project.

3.3.3 Books and Newspapers

Also included as data sources were the study participants' published photojournalism work from the first two LOVE books as well as the *One Love* youth community newspaper. The books and newspapers were particularly important as a reference point for looking at the overall work produced by the teens selected and also, in one or two cases, where negatives had gone missing, I was able to scan images from the books and newspapers for display in the study. While participating in the Photojournalism Project, many of the teens were as prolific with their writing as they were taking pictures. These published personal pieces were invaluable in adding another dimension to the data already being collected in my study. I was able to gain further insight into what was going on in their personal lives at the time of their Photojournalism Project participation. I reviewed the books *LOVEworks!* and *Courage To Change* as well as the following six editions of the community newspaper *One Love*:

December 1997, vol.1
Summer 1998, vol.1,2
Summer 1999, vol.1,3
Winter 2000, vol.2,1
Fall 2000, vol.2,2
Summer 2002, vol.4, 1.

I also looked at old registration forms, group lists, newsletters, and internal organizational memos, emails, faxes, et cetera, in an effort to reacquaint myself with the program as it had existed in the past.

3.3.4 Videos

I viewed several videos documenting the work of the LOVE organization and the Photojournalism Project. These included: video footage from the first Leadership Camp held in 1996, which I attended along with some of the study participants. There were some video workshops held over the four-day campout, in which several video pieces were created by the teens as a means of self-expression and to heighten awareness about the issues surrounding youth violence. In January 2000, I went to Vancouver as part of the LOVE team to help set up the LOVE organization and the Photojournalism Project at Langara College. Two of my study participants accompanied me on this trip. Also, in the fall of 2000, I was invited to Indiana University at Bloomington along with four LOVE youth in support of an exhibit featuring work from the Photojournalism Project. Those four teens are included in this study. I shot some of my own video footage for documentation purposes on both of these trips and viewing these videos helped reacquaint me with the teens selected for the study.

3.4 Procedure

3.4.1 Introduction

In the winter of January, 2004, I contacted each of the potential study candidates to explain the study proposal and at the same time find out about their availability. By the time mid-June had arrived, I was ready to start my study. I had contacted all ten candidates and held one or two brief telephone conversations to outline the goals of the study and what I was hoping to accomplish with their participation in it. They agreed to come and meet with me once again at Dawson College and I set up initial dates with them and instructed them to meet me in the photographic facilities of the College, the same place where they had first come to as LOVE Photojournalism Project participants. I started the interviews by the third week of June and continued to interview through to December of the same year.

I conducted a series of three audiotaped interviews with each of the selected participants. Each interview lasted for about 60 to 90 minutes. In the first interview, I started by outlining the purpose of the study, the issues of confidentiality and anonymity, and how many interviews would be required of them (Appendix I). I also let them know that they would be given the opportunity to read the material I produce and that they could make corrections or edit sections that they might not be comfortable with before I make a final submission. In the end seven out of the ten participants reviewed their portraits. Only one did not want their real name used and pseudonyms were used for three others who I was unable to contact.

All of the interviews for my study were conducted in the lighting studio at Dawson College. This was fitting since this was the same studio that had been home base for the Photojournalism Project when it started. All of the teens in the

study were familiar with the locale because they came there as Photojournalism Project participants. For many, when they arrived for the first interview there was a sense of wonder at returning to a setting that brought with it so many memories. I shared with them the same level of recollection and comfort gained from our experience within the Photojournalism Project. I was quite surprised at the relative ease and frankness of the participants. Several felt that it was a good time in their lives to look back and reflect on their experience during their Photojournalism Project years. I would like to think that the same safe and secure environment that had led them for the first time to the lighting studio had been recreated for my research.

3.4.2 Interview One – Everyday Life

The first interview was designed to link with the four settings as described by Noam, Winner, Rhein and Molad, where at-risk behavior occurs, i.e., the family, community, peer world and school. With this in mind, I set out an interview protocol that would provide data that would shed light on their personal lives and details of some of the significant life events that they had experienced in these potentially at-risk settings. I did make a list of potential topics that I hoped to explore with each interviewee (see Appendix II). However, in the end, this list became a list of topics to be brought out during the interview only if I felt the interview was stalling or not bringing out the data I needed from the interview. In the end, I decided that I would conduct the interviews not as a question and response interview but preferred to let my interviewees tell their life stories as uninterrupted as possible. For my topic list, I referred to Funderburg, who, in her interviews and stories about the lives of bi-racial Americans, divided her interview process into two categories. First, she focused on what she called “daily

life”, such as parents and family, schools, neighborhood, friends and strangers, work, love and romance. Her second category, “beliefs” shifted the focus onto the topics of religion, politics, and prejudice. Funderburg’s topics linked well with the four identified at-risk settings previously mentioned and would assist me in bringing forth the data necessary for my study.

My first question was always the same for all of the first interviews, “Why do you think I picked you to participate in my study?” The question worked wonderfully as an icebreaker because it generated a quick and candid response from all of the teens. Some took it quite seriously and reflected for a minute about their experience in the Photojournalism Project. Others took the question quite lightly and didn’t hesitate to humorously blurt out that they “rocked!” and should be included in the study. Finally, several spoke of how they wanted to “give back” to LOVE and the community through their activities such as school outreaches, exhibits and a variety of presentations. They all did reply to the question and it served me well by providing a level of comfort that enabled me to continue in a relaxed atmosphere. I noted the amazing level of trust built between the youths and me. This trust had been built up over time and lent itself to our continuing in a collaborative environment.

After the icebreaker question, I proceeded to discuss the role of memory in our lives and asked them to go into their memories as far back as possible and tell me about their lives. I let them know that I was interested in their own personal journey into the Photojournalism Project. I explained that often it is the journey that supplies the real lessons in and about life. I let them tell their stories freely and it was a fascinating experience for me because as their teacher I realized how little I actually knew these teens. There were past episodes and incidents in their lives that had been kept hidden from others and me in the

LOVE community. Now, years later, there was a willingness to reveal and clarify some of these incidents. This indicated to me that these teens had grown in such a way as to be able now to construct and articulate the meaning of these past events in their lives.

3.4.3 Interview Two – The Photo Interview

In *Using Images In Qualitative Research*, Weber noted that “an important body of interdisciplinary scholarship in education is incorporating arts-based techniques into its research methodology.” She goes on to point out that “a research question or topic may call for an image-based component to be used in the research process”. As such, she identifies four ways in which images can be used to enhance a study of this nature:

- Images as data: The data you wish to analyze is comprised of images.
- Using images to elicit data: The data you wish to analyze is elicited or obtained through images.
- Images as documentation: The process of collecting non-visual data is visually recorded.
- Images as mode of interpretation or representation: The analysis, interpretation and representation is image-based.

The image-based component of this study from the Photojournalism Project fit into the first two categories. They qualify for the first category because the images are being used as data to analyze. They qualify for the second because data is being elicited through the images. As far as the other two ways that images can be used, there was no visual recording at any stage of the research process. Regarding the last of the ways that images can be used, in this study the images are not the sole basis of analysis, interpretation and representation for this

study. That duty is shared with the case-study techniques that are also used in the research process.

The second interview became the photo elicitation or photo-interviewing part of the study. As an icebreaker question, I asked the participants if they had any prior knowledge about photojournalism before becoming involved with the Photojournalism Project. I also asked if they actually felt like a photojournalist during their involvement with us and I pointed out to them that for my study I would present some of their images or, in some cases, a sample piece of writing they produced during their participation in the Photojournalism Project. This being the case, we reviewed their negatives, contact sheets, and prints of the images they produced. I asked them to put their work in chronological order. I found that this assisted the recall of their experience. Second, we identified and discussed the images that they felt were “special” for them. Did the image either rekindle memories of a certain event or time in their life, or, were certain shots significant because of the lighting, composition, angle of view or location? As their photography teacher, I was proud to hear them describe their images using this visual, photographic language. Indeed, it validated and made me feel rewarded for my efforts in having them discover photography and its potential as a creative and positive outlet for self-expression.

3.4.4 Interview Three – Wrapping Up

The third meeting became essentially a wrap-up interview. For the first part of the wrap-up, I would ask them about their feelings and beliefs on a variety of topics, such as politics, religion, relationships, and, finally, violence and the future for young people with respect to violence. In terms of value for this study, I found that the discussion about these issues indicated to me that young people

clearly have opinions and thoughts on these subjects and they welcome the opportunity to be heard. To wrap up our series of interviews, we would go through the photos again, perhaps read a piece of their writing published in *One Love*, the youth newspaper, or from one of the published books of collected works from the LOVE youth.

3.5 Treatment of Data

For this study, I implemented Collier's four stage image-based model for the visual analysis of photographic images. It provided me with a conceptual framework with which to collect, organize and display the images as data.

First stage- observe the data as a whole; 'listen' to its overtones and subtleties to discover connecting contrasting patterns...write down questions that makes images trigger in your mind; these may provide important direction for future analysis...

Second stage- make an inventory of all images. Depending on what you are trying to find out, design your inventory around categories that reflect and assist your research goals.

Third stage- Structure your analysis. Go through the evidence with specific questions-measure distance, count, compare...Produce detailed descriptions.

Fourth stage- search for meaning significance by returning to the complete visual record... Re-establish context, lay out the photographs, view images in entirety then write conclusions as influenced by this final exposure to the whole (39).

It seemed natural for me, in my role as photography teacher, that the first stage of data collection started with the negatives, contact sheets, photographic images and text produced by the study participants. I went back into the photo archives I had been keeping and started to collect all of the items mentioned above related to this study that I had in my possession. I felt that the photo-interviewing technique lent itself well to this part of the research process. The

interview was done in a collaborative fashion between myself, as researcher/teacher, and the interviewees. This appeared to strike an appropriate counterbalance from the narratives garnered from the first and more life-experience-based interview. The images chosen were identified as being significant to each interviewee for either personal or photographic reasons. The reasons for the images selected were discussed during the interview.



I next began to play back the nearly 40 hours of audiotape I had recorded from the series of three interviews with each participant. As I listened to the interview sessions, I typed out the conversations I had with each of the interviewees. I kept the personal stories intact and in chronological order as they were told to me. The interview protocol I had set for myself for each of the interviews helped keep me on track with the various themes that I pursued with each study participant. After the two interviews I had collected my data for each case study by transcribing the audiotaped interviews and gathering a final selection of a set of images deemed significant to each interviewee.

Chapter 4: Portraits

Introduction

I now present ten “portraits” based on the qualitative data collected for each study participant. Campbell observed that “the final step in the research process was interpreting the various characteristics and themes in each set of data and writing each case study in the form of a portrait” (57). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis described portraiture as a “method of qualitative research that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life” (xv). In addition, they write:

The drawing of the portrait is placed in social and cultural context and shaped through dialogue between the portraitist and the subject, each one negotiating the discourse and shaping the evolving image. The relationship between the two is rich with meaning and resonance and becomes the arena for navigating the empirical, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions of authentic and compelling narrative (xv).

For this study I decided to follow their guidelines and create 10 portraits based on the data garnered from the three audiotaped interviews. I found that the creation of the ten portraits fit comfortably with many parts of the conceptual and theoretical framework of this study as presented in the review of literature. The construction of the ten portraits also underscores, as Watrin suggested, similarities between the artistic process and the process of doing qualitative research. In her article *Art as Research*, she writes, “art is a form of qualitative research, very much like hermeneutic phenomenology, in that art seeks to describe and interpret lived experience through creation and the aesthetic experience” (99).

To construct the portraits, I followed the themes as outlined in my

methodology. For the data collected from the first interview, I kept to their words as told to me, editing slightly for clarity. For the image-based component, I extracted comments about the Photojournalism Project and the selected photos. The portraits are presented in a chronological order starting with participants from the very first year of the Photojournalism Project 1995 up to and including participants from eight years later in 2003. Over the years, I had experienced the pleasure of teaching photography to all the study participants.

4.1 Monica (not her real name) Portrait

Introduction

Monica, age 28, was born in Nova Scotia and raised in Montreal. She works as a bilingual account executive in Toronto.

When you first meet Monica, the first thing you notice is her wonderful warm smile that lights up the room as she enters. It was Monica who exclaimed, “ I have never been chosen for anything before!” after she got the call on the phone saying she had been selected to join the first, pioneering group of youths for the Photojournalism Project in January 1995. Since graduating high school and continuing her post-secondary studies, she has been instrumental in helping LOVE grow into the international organization that it is today. Monica was not only an active participant in the Photojournalism project, but went on to become one of the first LOVE youth to do workshops and presentations in public schools, community conferences and corporate boardrooms. In her five years working at LOVE as an Administrative Assistant, she provided strong administrative support in the office and as well as guidance and support and friendship to the steady stream of LOVE youth who have come through its doors. When I asked Monica to participate in my study, she exuded the strong confidence that she always seems to have. When she thought about it she said, “Why not talk to me?“ It was

fitting that the first interview with Monica came the day before her 25th birthday. There is something special about turning 25. I'm not sure whether its just because you reach the quarter-century mark or because you're half-way through your twenties and that, for most of us, school is a thing of the past. Jobs, careers and relationships start to take priority. Monica embodied this time of life when she arrived for the first interview. She was bubbling with excitement as she anticipated celebrating her 25th birthday. As Monica explained, it seemed like the right time to reflect on her personal life as well as her experience with LOVE, especially since she had just started a new job after working at the LOVE office for five years.

Monica Portrait

To start interview one with Monica I asked her to recall as far back as she could and tell me about her life before I met her in the Photojournalism Project.

She began, "I remember the move from Nova Scotia quite vividly. Many people can't remember that far back into their childhood but I clearly remember that time. I was only two years-old when we moved to Montreal and settled in a predominantly French-speaking neighborhood.

"It was hard to get along in the neighborhood when none of us spoke any French," Monica continued. "I went to an inner city English-speaking elementary school. Most of the kids were Greek and Portuguese and I was one of the few Black kids there. I felt underlying racism from both the teachers and the students. I didn't even get along with the other Black kids because I was dark-skinned and they were light. I was constantly taunted by the kids in my neighborhood as well as at school. It wasn't unusual to hear the 'n-word' or 'chocolat' shouted at me."

Going back to her family story Monica says, "My parents had separated in Nova Scotia and my mom decided to come to Montreal to start a new family life

for me and my sister. We were poor. My single mom was on social assistance trying to make ends meet. We were so poor that I was even jealous of the other kids lunches. I always had bologna and mustard sandwiches. After the separation, my father went to live in the United States. After we came to Montreal my father lost contact with us.

“My mother had a new drug dealing boyfriend who it turns out wasn’t very nice and during this time my two sisters were born—two sisters who didn’t look like me. My life was surrounded by drugs and violence as my mother became more deeply involved in an abusive relationship. I remember lots of moving around and once staying in a shelter. I began to develop anger towards men. I never knew my father. To me he was dead.”

Monica went on to talk about her new high school. “The high school I attended was in another section of Montreal and was more English-speaking than what I had been accustomed to. I was in for more of a culture shock since this school had more Black English-speaking students—something new for me. I would still be asked, ‘Where are you from?’ For maybe the first time I didn’t feel like a lone minority but I still didn’t really fit in since I was from Nova Scotia, spoke ‘White’ and was not of Caribbean descent. I didn’t even know what reggae was and I didn’t wear the same type of clothes. My high school career started off good. There were some ‘nice’ teachers but there were also the nasty ones who predicted that I would end up like the rest of my family with little education and living on social assistance. Most of my family are drug addicts, young and pregnant, and/or living on welfare.

“I was eventually able to reconnect with my father and he would fly in from the United States to check on both me and my schooling. He showed a lot more interest in my schooling than my mother. He had been searching for us for years

but our location had been kept a secret by my mother's boyfriend and my uncle. When I started visiting him in Atlanta I would come back with new clothes I had picked up shopping and some of the other students thought that I was a rich girl. He showed more interest in me than my mother and helped me to get better grades until I went boy-crazy at 14. I started to have crushes on lots of guys. My confidence started to grow. I connected with the other Black kids.

“But, I still had anger... I would get in fights back in the French-speaking neighborhood that I still lived in and, as my body developed, I would wear baggy clothes and was ashamed and embarrassed. The boys were all scared of my mother who was very, very protective of her girls. 'Don't talk to my daughter', she would yell at the neighborhood boys.”

Monica's response to the question of how she became involved with LOVE was that “things got out of control for me one day at school and I actually pushed a teacher. That's when it was recommended that I join LOVE. Once I joined I began to open up and lie about the 'perfect life' I didn't have.”

About life at home, Monica went on to say, “About this time, my mother's boyfriend got out of jail after being locked up for seven years for raping a thirteen year-old girl and drug trafficking. My mother took him back because she felt that my sisters needed their father and she still loved him. They were happy. I was starting to see things differently as he began to perform lewd and disgusting sexual acts in front of me and my other sister— not his own two daughters though. We suffered in silence to keep the family together. To go to LOVE and then return home was really hard. I never told my father. For a while my father wanted me and my sisters to live with him. If only he had known at the time that his daughters were being abused in their own house, he would have acted quickly. I had a big secret I was carrying and I worried about LOVE finding out

and calling social services. I didn't want to go under foster care or go live in a group home and be separated from my sisters. So, I suffered. On school outreaches talking to kids I felt like a hypocrite because I was telling them that if they were in an abusive situation or knew of somebody else in one they should

Monica: Photo Table



Figure 1

“I really liked the Photojournalism Project and participated in all parts. I had my camera with me all the time and took pictures.”

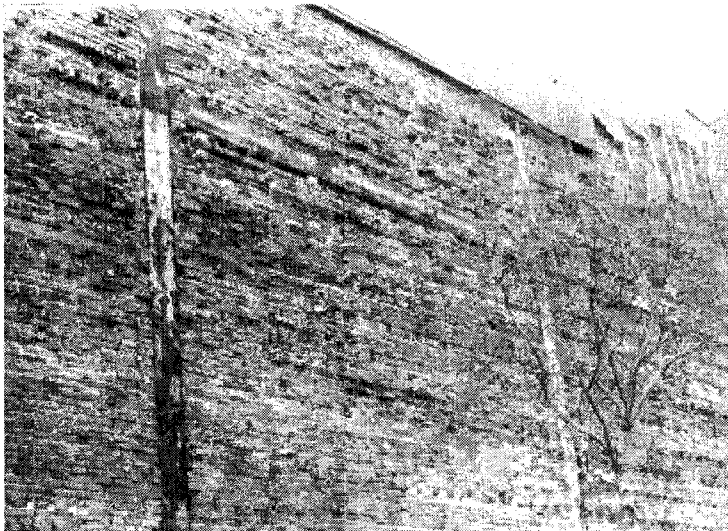


Figure 2

“In the beginning I put up walls to protect myself and not reveal my real personality or identity.”

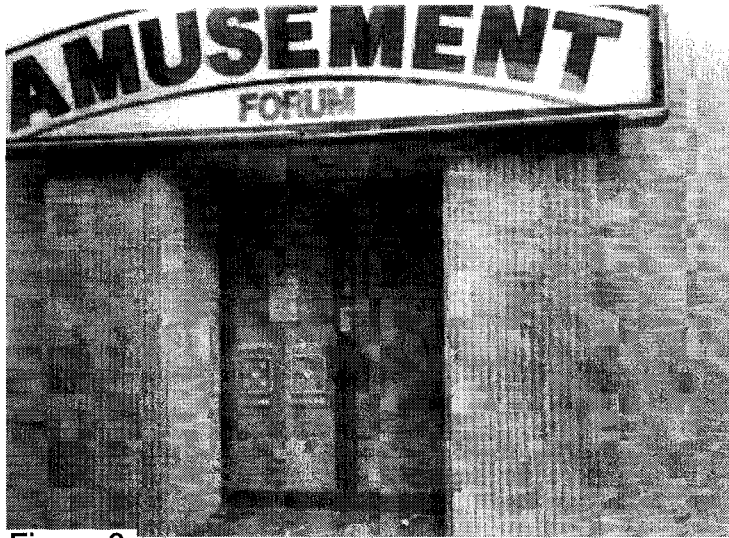


Figure 3

"I had intense love for this one guy. In the end I wa beaten up by this same guy.It was hard to love again."



Figure 4

"This shot was disturbing. My mother encouraged me to participate in PJP until the exhibit and the stories came out."



Figure5

"I began to think of myself as being a creative person. I did a visual presentation about women. I read an Angela Mayou poem, sang the song "Natural Woman" and used my pictures from LOVE."



Figure 6

"This image became the first photo in LOVE book, L.O.V.E.works!, which came out in 1998. I was very proud."



speaking out. My little sisters were happy and I loved them enough to stay and suffer. Finally on a school outreach I broke down. I still wouldn't leave the family though until finally my sister had a very bad incident with my mother's boyfriend and I called our father and told him everything. He showed up at the doorstep within hours.

“My relationship with my mother suffered the same fate because she did nothing and didn't believe me. She said ‘I didn't want to see anyone happy because I was miserable.’ She started physically and emotionally abusing me until I was eighteen and moved out on my own. My father threatened and warned my mother and she finally threw her boyfriend out of the house. It is my sense that my mother loved my younger sisters more than me and my other sister, much like now, where she loves my little brother. She needs to be in control and she loses this with her kids during the teen years.” (Moncia. Personal Interview. 22 June 2004.)

During the third interview, Monica told the story of enduring more violence as well as revealing some of her personal life and beliefs. “During my first year at Dawson (College), I was dating someone who eventually viciously assaulted me in the subway station. As a result, I was put on crutches for one month. I remember the sick feeling I had walking into school the next day knowing that everybody knew what had happened to me. My mother, she just thought it was

just family history repeating itself, but my father came into town and eventually had the boy charged. He wasn't allowed to come near me after that.

“When I recently started to work at my new job, the other Black women felt threatened by me. My personality was more like an American Black woman than the others. I was finally feeling more comfortable about myself after all these years. It's kind of funny because when I was in school I was considered too White and now here at work I'm too Black. Sometimes race is a plus and sometimes a minus. I broke stereotypes. I had success at work and I had success at McGill. I knew I had made a mark when one day a colleague asked me about a procedure on the job.”

Regarding religion, Monica claimed, “Religion I do believe in. My father used Christianity as a way to help me get through my depression troubles last fall. I actually went to church in Atlanta and was able to deal with a lot of issues I had. I do believe. Of course there's lots of hypocrisy by 'one day' Christians as I call them. My father instilled certain values in me. For a while, I was struggling with insomnia, bad dreams and what not...for four months. When you have negative things in your life, you are constantly tormented. In front of the congregation in Atlanta I was able to overcome my fears and troubles. After the trip I had no more recurring dreams. There is a higher power watching over us.”

Monica's response to the question about whether violence is happening less or more in our world was, “Do I think that violence is getting reduced in our world? The glorified gangster lifestyle, bad music, and bad videos can contribute to violence in the community. In my old hood people are still into drugs, gangs, and violence. Violence is getting worse is all I can say.” (Monica. Personal Interview. 24 August 2004.)

Monica Photo Interview

I particularly enjoyed going through the negatives and contact sheets with Monica as she mused about how she looked 10 years earlier back in high school and how, as she put it, “I never had thought of myself as being a creative person.”

About her participation in the Photojournalism Project she said, “I really liked the Photojournalism Project and participated in all parts. I enjoyed making something and seeing it finished, the process. There was big anticipation to developing the film that had been shot. The pictures are evidence of themselves. I had my camera with me all the time and took pictures. People from school were not surprised to learn that I was working with LOVE because they remember me having my camera on me all the time. Pictures recall memory. When I think tomorrow that I’m 25.” (Moncia. Personal Interview. 12 July 2004.)

4.2 Miguel (not his real name) Portrait

Introduction

Miguel, 28, currently works full-time as a graphic designer. After completing high school and collegial studies in graphic design, Miguel worked for several years in the fashion industry as a supplier before putting his creative talent back to use as a graphic designer

When we began to select participants for the initial launch of the photojournalism Project back in 1995, one of our mandates was to bring together youth from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Youth came from different schools and neighborhoods, and with different experiences and perspectives with regards to community violence. This approach was taken in the belief that violence knows no boundaries, and that we are all affected by the violence that surrounds us daily. Miguel was unique in that he wasn’t from one of the local inner cities school nor had he experienced a violent incident in his life. Miguel

had become bored with school. He was barely attending classes and was spending more and more of his time smoking pot and hanging out with his friends. This behaviour is not unusual with teens. I like to call it the “B” syndrome.—BOREDOM! Miguel was typical of many teens who simply become bored with school, bored with family life and bored with most of the activities and interests that had consumed his life until he hit his teen years. Luckily, Miguel had a very strong creative arts background, which is what attracted him to the Photojournalism Project. He drew and played music and wanted to learn photography. Though very quiet and sometimes brooding, Miguel’s artistic talent quickly shone through and when we met again I thanked him for the immense contribution that he had made with his photos and writings to the first Photojournalism Project exhibit. It was his work that helped to launch the project and show the powerful communication that could be expressed by young people when given the opportunity.

Miguel Portrait

When asked why he thought I picked him for my study Miguel said, “You picked me because you saw me at the theatre! My contribution would be my experience.”

Miguel: Photo Table



Figure 7

“When the opportunity to do LOVE came, I was very, very interested and you were supplying everything.”

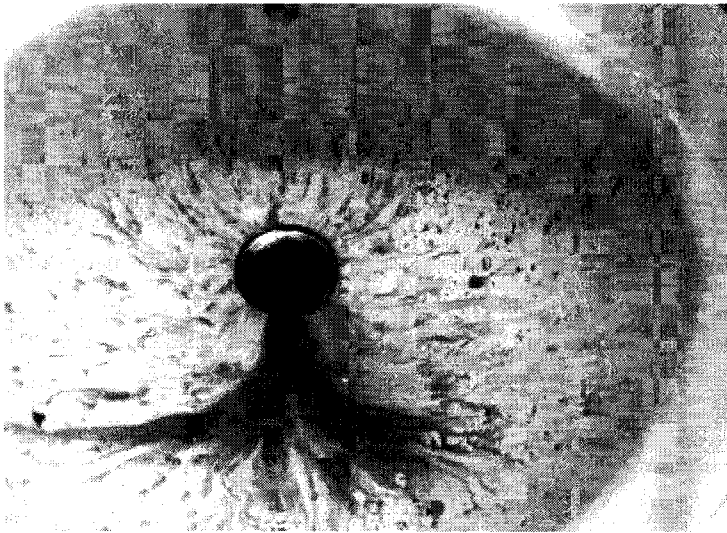


Figure 8

“I’ve always liked to look at artwork, especially the very dark stuff that most people don’t like.”



Figure 9

“I’m still taking pictures
and drawing so I think
I’ll always still do art.”



Miguel then went on to talk about his family life. “I was born in Montreal, but grew up in suburban West Island. My parents were from Chile and escaped to Canada from the violent political situation that erupted there in the early seventies. I have a twin brother and my sister is four years older.”

When asked about his school experiences, Miguel replied that, “When I think back to my early school years, I remember that my primary school was very multicultural. Later on, when I got to college, I noticed that the other students weren’t as used to the multicultural setting that I had been exposed to. Also, when people at college talked about their past school years, it seemed that many of them went to violent schools. At my school, the administration was so nice that they even asked my parents if they wanted to have both me and my twin brother in the same class. This was because when you’re a twin you are always with your twin, so they thought that maybe we should be separated for our own good. The first two grades (we) were in the same class, after that we switched. We never had a high school class together, but we have the same group of friends.”

When I asked Miguel if he had any other family in Montreal he said that “my dad’s sister is also here in Montreal, but they don’t really get along. My father was an insurance salesman and at one time he lent people lots of money in the community who never paid him back. After that he stayed away from them. He

was never able to get close to those people again. I do speak Spanish, but I feel much more English and French than Chilean. I studied a little bit about the political situation and I do understand some of the events that went on.

“I remember in high school, I skipped 3 months of the school year. I was in grade 10 and I thought school was a waste of time. I smoked a lot of pot. When you like it like I did, you go and smoke whenever your mind tells you to. Eventually I was grounded and I shaped up and got it under control. It was during this time that I was referred to and called by LOVE. After high school and two years of the Photojournalism Project, I went right into CEGEP (college). I studied social science for one year and then went into graphic design. I then worked and saved my money and went back to Chile to where my mother’s family came from. When you go there and come back you realize how hard it would be to go back and live there.” (Miguel. Personal Interview, 24 July 2004.)

In the third interview, Miguel talked about religion and his travels. “My mother’s mom is very Christian and believes in it a lot. My mother believes in religion a bit but she never forced it on us. Religion is a nice story but it doesn’t make sense. I certainly don’t know how to explain it, but if it helps some people, fine. I went to churches in Santiago, Chile while I was down there because of the architecture and the paintings. The images were so gory, way more bloody than we’re used to here. I thought it was cool.” (Miguel. Personal Interview. 24 August 2004.)

Miguel Photo Interview

In the photo interview, Miguel reflected on the enjoyment he experienced from doing creative arts. “I play guitar and I was in a band in high school. It wasn’t big, but I had a lot of fun. I recently bought some equipment. I was

always drawing when I was a kid. I was good in art and I did a lot of it, especially in high school. When the opportunity to do LOVE came, I was very, very interested and you were supplying everything. It was great! I also do cartoons. I did my own comic books. I've always liked to look at artwork, especially the very dark stuff that most people don't like. Music and art was always number one for me in high school. Like I've already said, my high school was not intense with gangs, plus in my neighborhood everyone knew the twins. I guess its fun having a twin. It's like you have your best friend. We played in bands and we played some sports together. Now I do CD covers for bands. I eventually want to do some silkscreen. I'm still taking pictures and drawing so I think I'll always still do art." (Miguel. Personal Interview. 27 July ,2004.)

4.3 Jesse Portrait

Introduction

Jesse, age, 26, is store manager at a local video store outlet with plans to enroll at Concordia University sometime in the near future. The idea and image of the rebellious out-of-control teenager has been a part of popular culture for quite awhile now and has been represented through films like *Rebel Without A Cause*, *A Clockwork Orange* and most recently *13*. When the Photojournalism Project began recruiting teens to participate, some of the teens specifically targeted were the frustrated, alienated, and disenfranchised youth. These teens were still in school and could be found in the more intimate settings of alternative schools. The Jesse I first met fit the profile of the quintessential troubled and rebellious youth. Jesse was in fact, too young at age twelve to join the Photojournalism Project, so he had to wait until several months later before he could become an active participant. One of the images used in the first exhibit in

June 1995 was a portrait of Jesse, dressed in all black, head down and sitting slumped over a windowsill. It was an image of anger, frustration and loneliness.

It took some time for my relationship to develop with Jesse. There was always a hint of mistrust towards adults, typical of any teen who has had a life of bad experiences with adults. However, once Jesse began to reveal who he really was underneath, there was a recognizable sense of calm, a good sense of humour and an ability to communicate and articulate his thoughts and ideas through photography, writing and music. Over the years I was fortunate enough to have been on many school outreaches with Jesse and it would not surprise me if Jesse became a teacher because he was always comfortable working with young children. I think these children could sense the calm and caring of Jesse's presence. They learned his name quickly and always looked forward to his next visit with them. As time passed, Jesse has developed a strong sense of giving back to the community and it was only fitting that the Government of Canada should recognize him for his leadership and contributions in helping to make it a better world for all people to live in by presenting him with the Queen's Medal from Heritage Canada.

Jesse Portrait

In response to my lead-in interview question, which asked him why he thinks I chose him for my study, he said, "You picked me because I've been here a pretty long time. As LOVE grew, I grew as a person. After 10 years, I can give back the same way LOVE gave to me."

Jesse continued recalling his early childhood. "Where I live now is where I first lived until I was 6 or 7. Then we moved more out in the country. In that neighborhood, it was hard to make friends because it was a French neighborhood. I really only had two or three friends. I never got along with too many of the

other kids. They were either too trashy or too weird. During this time I was living with my Mom.

“My Dad left before I can remember. There was lots of violence towards my mother from my father. He was an alcoholic at the time. His family background was that of a very poor European immigrant with an angry father who beat all the kids. He came from a very violent home. My uncle committed suicide around that time and my parents divorced. So I can remember that my Dad had a lot of anger from his family which came unto our family. So, along with the violence he was drinking, so that’s not a good mix. My mother was a tough woman and she said ‘Fuck that’ and kicked him out. There was also my older sister (who is) two years older.

“After the divorce my Dad was still irresponsible. He would be hung over and forget to pick my sister and I up at the subway station for visits. The same goes for my mother because she was dropping us off alone. So growing up I faced lots of abandonment issues. We were always being dropped off at lots of different people’s places which, when you’re a kid, is not that great. I learned to stick with myself. My sister and I took care of each other while my mom worked all hours to support us. My mom eventually met someone who she married and they had a baby, (a) younger sister. I’m glad my mother met someone—I had no problem with this. He was a nice guy..”

The interview moved on with Jesse discussing his school life. “I was just getting settled in school when we moved to another town. At the new school, I made friends right away with kids who liked the same music. In grade five I wasn’t bad. But then in grade six I was always absent. I missed a month at a time. Looking back, I don t know, school just wasn’t my thing. For some kids, it usually comes later but for me they sent me to psychologists because I was too

morbid for them, writing scary stories and listening to heavy metal. Everybody needs an outlet. There was no alternative, no artwork. That's why LOVE worked! You could write things out. In school, I really wanted to play music, but there was nothing else but the recorder. I was really into it and I wanted a guitar. I was always painting and doing magic tricks and nobody ever wanted to tap into it. It was like, 'don't go there its wrong'. I was fed up with school because they kept treating me different. I gave up, my grades were low and I wasn't paying attention, but I passed and went onto high school. I started in September and lasted until about Halloween. I skipped classes, went to shopping centers, smoked joints and was just getting trashed and into fights.

“My dad and some of my aunts had gone to that school, so some of the older staff had a grudge against my family. Also, one of my cousins was really bad. The principal's office was my homeroom. At home, I would fight with my sister. She was drinking. She reacted to everything that way. With most of my friends, there were older brothers and sisters and it would be at the different houses that we would get high, too.”

Continuing talking about his high school experience, Jesse claimed that “ high school was pretty bad. One day I took off. I was twelve and hitchhiked into the city. It was no big deal. I just showed up at my father's work and I've lived with him since then. I didn't go back to school until after Christmas. My grades were too low, so they recommended that I go to a small alternative school. Right away, I got into trouble. I fell back in with the bad kids. I was a rocker hanging out with other rockers. We got into trouble by setting things on fire, for instance. I was only 12 and I was in with the worst kids. The school was a dumping ground for all the fuckups and druggies. All the big city kids doing stuff which was new for me—showing up at school with stolen cars and robbing parked beer trucks. We

were a different group. I remember I took some beatings. I remember myself and another guy being drunk and beating a kid up. I had steel-toe boots on. I would sometimes snap when I got a bit wasted. A few times when I'm not really thinking and the alcohol takes over, it can be like tapping into my evil side. I got beat up a few times. I was always able to get up. It was more like 'Ok, you beat the crap out of me can I go home now?' I've been jacked and robbed on the subway. I'm not stylish, so I'm not an easy target. Life in the neighborhood where some of my friends came from was filled with alcohol and drugs. I was 12 or 13 years-old and drugs were all around. Alcohol, cocaine, and mushrooms

Jesse: Photo Table

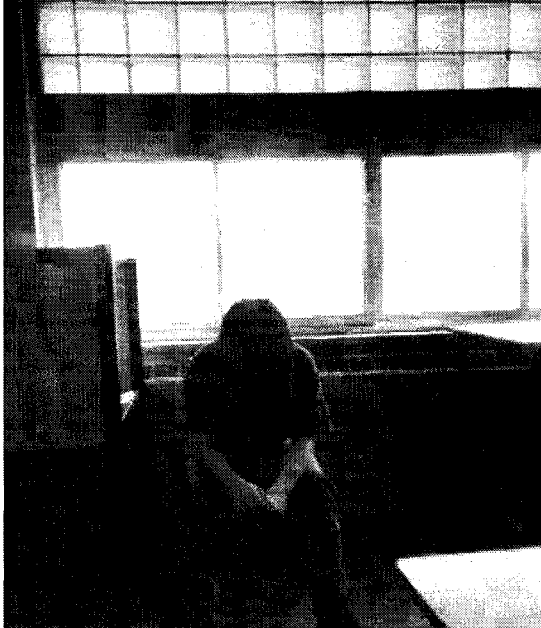


Figure 10

This shot of Jesse was taken by another LOVE teen already in the Photojournalism Project. Jesse was only twelve and would join later that year.



Figure 11

"I was a rocker hanging out with other rockers."



Figure 12

Jesse meets one of his heroes, Ozzy Osborne, arranged by LOVE at a local radio station.



Figure 13

"I have my own faith. I find it a bit corrupt, organized religion."



“My sister and I took care of each other while my mom worked all hours to support us.”

Figure 14



“The school was a dumping ground for all the fuckups and druggies.”

Figure 15



were plentiful. We would even drink with their parents and then go to the next house and party some more.

“Living with my Dad, he was a real hardass. He was cleaned up and had the same job for 10 years. So it worked. I helped him become more responsible, getting groceries and all at that stuff. I saw LOVE do a presentation at our school but I waited until the next year when I was thirteen. I would check it out with some of the older kids already in (the project) and that is when I met you the following year.

“I’m still good friends with two guys who I sat with my first day at the alternative school. One plays bass and both of them are Metallica freaks. I’ve always listened to only Metallica. Even today I listen to it everyday. The structure of the songs, the composition, melodies and how the harmonies work. It’s so rich. So when I picked up the guitar, I learned how to play from their music. They were people I could relate to. They’re not just four tough guys drinking beer. Their music was a part of my life. It even helped me to write. They dealt with political issues, antiwar songs, later on emotional stuff, the bandwagon aspect of religion...” (Jesse. Personal Interview, 28 June 2004.)

As we moved into the third interview, I asked Jesse about his religious beliefs. “I was never brought up into religion. I found it on my own. I have my own beliefs about the afterlife. I believe in giving back to the universe. That gives to

us. I have my faith and it provides. I find it a bit corrupt, organized religion. Churches are closing and eventually there will be no more Catholicism.”

Talking more about his personal life, Jesse went on, “I lived briefly with a girl but it went sour with lots of fighting. She was annoying and clinging. ‘Yeah, you’re my roommate but I still want to go out and see my friends!’ She was in a circle of friends I had known for about five years. We became friends again after she broke up with one of the other guys and needed a roommate and I wanted to move from my dad’s apartment. It was just after I got my teacher’s assistant job in an elementary school through one of my former head teachers. At the school I was helping the special education kids in grade five and six. I helped them with reading. It gave me a chance to be a teacher and now I want to go back to university and become one. I made such a connection with those kids and at the same I was in that bad relationship, so it helped me. In the end I left that relationship the same way I had left my mom’s 10 years earlier. When the girl went out, I got my friend with his truck and took my shit out. I’m not good with confrontation so I left. I was homeless, I went back to live with my sister across from my mom’s.”

As we wrapped up our series of interviews, Jesse offered the following synopsis, “I like living where I am now. My grandmother is not far away, so my mother visits her and me. I drop in to my grandmother’s for coffee. I’m back in the old neighborhood. It’s strange. It’s where I lived when I was two. I sometimes give out money to people on the streets. I try to be a nice person. I try to give back, do my share of goodness in the world. It’s so fucked up! My sisters. One lives with my mother and the older one lives with her boyfriend. My relationship with my family is better than ever, even with my father since I moved out. Now its like we’re little kids again when my sister and I go out with him. My dad

appreciates what LOVE did for me. Recently I received a Queen's medal from Heritage Canada for helping get the LOVE organization started. A plaque and a gold medal I look at it everyday. Who would have thought!" (Jesse. Personal Interview. 24 August 2004.)

Jesse Photo Interview

Jesse didn't remember many details about most of the shots he took when we started putting them in chronological order. For the most part, he didn't really like most of his early work including those in the first LOVE book. I remember that even though Jesse didn't ask me for lots of film, when he did take some photos and go shoot he would always come back with intriguing and interesting images. With Jesse it was definitely quality, not quantity. (Jesse. Personal Interview. 12 July, 2004.)

4.4 Charles Portrait

Introduction

Charles, 28, was born in Alberta and is currently working and living in Montreal. Charles has one more year to complete his B.A. in Linguistics at Concordia University. Since joining LOVE, he has been involved in helping to set up LOVE in other cities, including most recently New York City. He has also gained recognition as a talented hip hop artist who has performed concerts in several venues throughout Canada and the United States. I met Charles not long after his arrival in Montreal. Even though he wasn't as deeply involved in the photography darkroom as some of the other LOVE youth were, his presence in the group was always strong. His passion for dialogue and discussion made him a philosopher king of sorts within in the expanding LOVE community. He easily assumed a leadership role because of his ability to blend in and connect with

many of the other LOVE youth.

When Charles and I did school outreaches together, especially the elementary school ones, Charles would quickly gain the young kids' attention because of his amazing gift for beat-boxing. This same talent earned him mutual respect amongst the older high school kids. Ultimately, it is Charles's willingness to explore and communicate his thoughts and feelings through dialogue, writing and music that has provided a lasting source of inspiration for all who know him. Charles said that there are friends and there are acquaintances. "I don't have a lot of good friends. Dave, a Native shaman I met said my name is white wolf, he made the analysis that I was the leader of the pack but not a part of it."

Charles Portrait

Charles's reply to my question as to why I chose him for my study was "I think you picked me because I came into the Photojournalism Project in only the second year and because I'm interesting. I was introduced to LOVE by my girlfriend who eventually left Montreal. She left, I stayed."

Recalling his early childhood, Charles said, "I was born in Edmonton, Alberta, February 8, 1979. My parents actually lived outside of Edmonton in Fox Creek, a small town with a population of about 2,500 people. Even though I was born there, I never spent a moment in Edmonton. My earliest memories start back when I was living in a trailer park in Fox Creek. There was a downtown trailer park area and there was an uptown trailer park area. We first lived in the downtown trailer park, but eventually wound up living in the uptown area. When you came up the hill you saw our trailer first. I actually have pictures of it.

"I clearly remember the arrival of my two younger brothers and my mother setting up the cribs. I especially remember my mother setting up the crib for my

younger brother. At one point we all lived as a family of five in the uptown trailer park. We lived there until I left. We always lived in the trailer park. There were always domestic quarrels around the house. There would even be quarrels between my parent's friends and my parents.

“There was a room in the trailer that we were always told not to go into. It was called the plant room. Once I went into the plant room and knocked something over and my mother became upset. Years later, I remember walking into a room and bang, there was that smell again! The whole smell came right back. That weed smell! It is interesting how the smell connected with my emotions.”

Charles continued, “I remember when I was in kindergarten and daycare. I went to kindergarten only in the morning, spending the afternoons in the daycare. One day at the daycare I asked to go back to school in the afternoon even though I didn't have school in the afternoon. Whoever I asked said 'sure' and let me go back. I was at the school for quite awhile before one of the teachers realized I wasn't supposed to be there. I remember that as being a weird experience. I was five! How could they have let me go outside on my own like that? The daycare people actually let me leave to go to school even though I didn't have to.”

At this point in the interview, Charles went on to discuss his school experience by stating that “I always hated school! I like to sit in the classroom. I like to learn. I like to hear teachers discuss things! But I hated homework. When I came home from school, I would put my books underneath the stairs outside, and on the way out the next morning I would pick them up. I still passed each year until grade seven. I was always the youngest kid in class because of my date of birth. I liked the fact that I was the youngest. I was always in trouble with teachers. My grade one teacher would put me in the corner and I would doodle

and draw. I would sit away from the entire class with my face looking at the wall. Even then I always wondered whether I would actually learn something from this kind of discipline. I would just doodle to pass the time.”

“I didn’t like art. Art was boring, cutting and gluing things. I liked to read. Once I got blamed for breaking one of those Ukrainian painted Easter eggs. The teacher had everybody write down the name of the kid who they thought had broken it. It was a witch-hunt and in the end my two buddies and I were blamed even though we didn’t do it! One time my Dad was working on a school project with me for hours. My mom became furious and ripped it up because she said it wasn’t really my work because I didn’t do it. It was a project that had some art to go with it and I didn’t think I was particularly good at art so my father helped. What she had done was the most ridiculous thing you could do to a student. Punish them when they are not naturally good at something.”

Charles reflected on his mother’s erratic behavior saying, “my mother was always drunk and a violent alcoholic. She had good intentions but at the same time she was an alcoholic. Every time something happened she might have had good intentions in her brain, but the alcohol was too much. Often my mother would beat me. I got the worst of the beatings—more than my two younger brothers. The other kids at school would often ask me what happened and I always made up a story. That is, until my grade seven year. My mother had continued to hit me when I did something. This time though I came in a half hour late one night and my mother was very drunk. She punched me in the face and my head went into the cupboard. She slammed my head in the door and punched me a few times, then said ‘now do your math homework!’ She was super drunk and she kept saying ‘how do you do this and how do you do that.’ We clutched and grabbed and she pulled my hair for about half an hour. I was around 12. After

the beating I listened to the music of the band Public Enemy. The next day I went to school with lots of bruises. Usually I never thought to say that my mother beat the shit out of me. That day I said my mother beat me up and that changed everything. Social workers were called in and my friends and teachers were all more sensitive and feeling bad for me. My mother asked me why didn't I just say that I had been hit by a hockey puck.

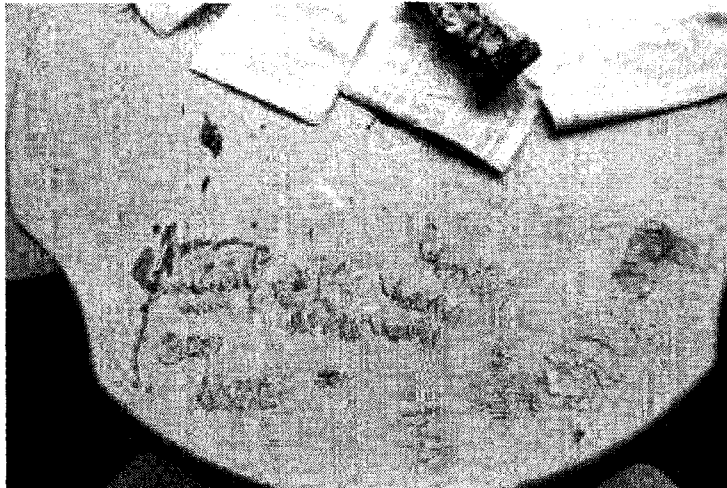
“From that point on my life really changed as I became a part of the social service system and put under foster care. You have to realize that I lived in a small town trailer park where you are considered to be an outcast by many people. It's a stigma and even some of your friends' parents are nervous about you. After the major incident with my mother, I went to live with a friend's family on the other side of town. It was pretty ironic. Imagine this poor white kid going to live with a Native family. Eventually, though, I did leave home. I said 'fuck it!' I put all my stuff in a bag and moved out. The first time I left, I stayed in town. I only went home for Christmas. But eventually I was 13 and I hitchhiked around from one town to another in the area. I had really become a part of social services system. I was notorious in all three towns in the area. Everybody was talking about me 'the kid from the trailer park'. I became like an urban legend in three small towns. 'Oh, your that kid,' they would say. People wanted to meet me and I partied all the time. We did do some criminal activity to support ourselves. One foster family tried to get me under control but they met with little success. One time I had had a social services court date to go to and when I went back to the foster home where I was living, they had left on a camping trip without me. I figured I lived there so I broke in and destroyed a screen, took some food and took some cigarettes. They tried to charge me with breaking and entering, but how can you be charged with breaking and entering at

Charles: Photo Table



The young CW, aka, KW.
Life in the trailer park.
(submitted photo)

Figure 16



"I hated school and I would
be punished and put in the
corner. I would just sit and
doodle and draw."

Figure 17



"I just took this shot finding it funny to see the bike parked in all the snow."

Figure 18



"Graffiti, is it art or is it vandalism? "

Figure 19



"I was arrested several times for tagging."

Figure 20



Charles (in front) on community outreach at a local elementary school. (submitted photo)

Figure 21



your own house? I was listening to rap and hip-hop music all the time, even though I was in this small town in Alberta. I would tell my cool friends with cash which music to buy. One night my father called asking me to come home, which was a big mistake because he wasn't supposed to have any contact with me since I was in the social services system. I was out of control, stealing cars, guns and smoking weed. I couldn't keep stealing cars and it all came crashing down when we got caught. One of the guys went to jail. I left Alberta and went to live with my grandmother in Montreal and became Charles Wagge.

“After that I came to Montreal to live with my grandmother where I had spent many summers staying at her house. My mother was originally from Montreal. I stopped doing drugs. I drank a little bit but I at least realized that I had to take care of my body though I smoked cigarettes. They were cheap so I smoked a lot. It helped me to live in Montreal. My nickname back home had been Kerry and that was what most people called me. In Montreal I had a whole new identity, Charles. It totally changed my life! No baggage, nobody knew me. For the first year, it was culture shock. I started school in an English-language school. They made me repeat grade nine because I had failed back in Alberta. Altogether I was in grade nine three times. Once back home in Alberta and twice in Montreal. The high school had 2,500 students. My hometown had 2,500 people in the whole town. The school was just too big for me to be comfortable so I found a small

alternative school, Mile End, where I would get the support, the attention and guidance needed to finish high school. It's at this school that I saw a LOVE presentation. I joined because my girlfriend was already in it. She quit and I'm still here. I remember the violence in my grandmother's neighborhood because of the biker's war that was going on at that time in the city." (Charles. Personal Interview. 24 August 2004.)

During the course of our wrap-up interview, Charles talked freely on a variety of topics. "Work is getting a job and having kids. Work is like my Achilles heel. I was just writing about it. Everybody needs money. There's a lot of slave labor out there. One job I had I was getting paid \$7.00 an hour. Another kid was getting \$6.25. He was younger and Mexican. This was a form of racism by the owners. At this same place, only the girls did the cash, the guys the labor work. The owner said the girls are more docile, so they talk less and work more. All the jobs I have had are class-based and gender-based, all have sociological barriers. Work turns me off. I believe that we should work for a purpose as opposed to working for a check. I haven't really been working since I've been in school. The jobs I've held are just all to get me by. We all have are goals, but many don't get there. I will go back to school. I don't have high school or university completed." (Charles. Personal Interview. 9 September 2004.)

Charles Photo Interview

When I asked Charles why he joined LOVE and what did he get out of the Photojournalism Project he replied that " I basically joined LOVE because it was fun. I stayed because it was fun. I hadn't done any art before but I read a lot. I never did photo before but I liked to write. I wrote on my own. The writing definitely attracted me. I also didn't know what photojournalism was. Once I had

the camera, I took pictures all the time. I didn't like doing the development part of photography. I would get one of the other kids to develop it for me. I like to take pictures. I would go out by myself and shoot. I also took a pen and paper and wrote also. I remember taking some of the shots. I remember all of them actually. I made sure to experiment with camera angles. I did a lot tagging and got arrested a few times and went to court for tagging. I do think graffiti is art. Some of it is also vandalism. It's all an ego thing, creating more and more sites. As far as photo (goes), I just took snapshots. I was definitely a photojournalist. I thought of myself as more documentary style rather than a photographer. I was really proud, the book, the newspaper and the media. It made me think about the possibilities for the future. Let's do something about the violence! I found that discussing violence allows for a common experience with the others because it affects us all." (Charles. Personal Interview. 31 August 2004.)

4.5 Joni (not her real name) Portrait

Introduction

Joni, 24, was born in Montreal and is currently pursuing studies at McGill University. Upon her graduation from Dawson College with a collegial diploma in photography, Joni traveled to many countries, including Russia, Turkey and Great Britain. Most recently, Joni was awarded a Millennium Scholarship that will allow her to continue her studies in Glasgow, Scotland.

During my time as the photography instructor in the Photojournalism Project I always looked forward to the series of interviews with the youth who were referred to us by community organizations. It is these first-time encounters that formed my initial snapshot of those youth selected to participate in the Photojournalism Project. I particularly always looked forward to meeting kids like Joni, who came from MIND, a very popular and successful alternative high

school in Montreal. During her interview, I can vividly remember Joni telling us of the recent random act of violence committed against her as she walked downtown in Montreal. She also recalled her six-month stint at a large and violence-filled public high school in Florida. These experiences were a stark contrast to her childhood in the country. Yet, here she was, ready to become involved in a project where she would learn more about the culture of violence that surrounded her. I've always maintained that we should be thankful for the alternative school network that exists today because they provide another learning option for young people like Joni, who are creative, responsible and much wiser than their age would indicate. These kids don't necessarily fit into the usual large public school institutions but they are highly motivated and opt for a smaller learning-community setting. Joni quickly understood the essence of the Photojournalism Project. She got it and was very excited at the opportunity to be creative and to be doing something about violence in the community.

Joni Portrait

To my usual lead-in question for interview one Joni responded, "You chose me because I went on to do photography at Dawson. I guess I brought a different perspective from the other kids in the project. I was a middle class country farm girl but I had experienced violence in my life.

"I was originally born in Montreal but moved to the country to my mom's horse farm when I was four-years-old. She had started a horseback riding school. I hadn't started kindergarten yet. Out in the country there are no neighborhoods so to speak, just farms. I lived there from four until I was 14. That is when I came back to the city for high school.

"I commuted to the closest elementary and high schools in the area. Life was

really good on the farm. I had lots of pets, goats and other animals. We were the only English-speaking family in the area but I got to know lots of other English kids who came to the school. My dad commuted back and forth from the city, so I didn't see lots of him through the week. School was strange for me. There were the very middle class kids versus the rural farm kids. I think I liked school. I got good marks. I was always a nerd. I was the only child. There was a step-brother who I didn't see very much from my Mom's previous marriage. But he died. It never occurred to me that he was a brother so I thought of myself as an only child.

"My parents separated when I was eight. I went back and forth from country to city. I spent every other weekend and vacations with my Dad. I didn't really understand the separation and divorce process. Obviously I can't remember some things. There was a lot of court stuff going on. They would fight all the time. During the time I would spend with my Dad we would go to museums, dinners, summer camps and bookstores. I also discovered cable television and video games. That was my first experience with the city.

"In grade eight, I went to school in Florida because my father was working there. I ended up in Jacksonville, Florida, a real blue collar, working class city in Florida with no beaches. I didn't enjoy my experience there. I hated it actually. I went to a large public high school that was pretty well segregated. There were metal detectors at the entrances and lots of violence. I can remember that there were lots of girl gangs and that they bumped me up a grade because I had a Canadian education. I only lasted six months there and came back to live with my mother on the farm and continue at my old high school. All the kids couldn't believe I had been away in Florida during that time. Ninth grade in the country—I hated it! Not much to do, just smoking and drinking..

“I wanted to go to high school in the city, so there was a power struggle between my parents as my mother tried to convince me to continue my studies in the country. At 14, though, I went to the city to live with my father and continued my studies at MIND, a small alternative school in the Montreal public school system. There they gave you more responsibility as a student. I liked that as compared to the school in the country. MIND kids could take care of themselves. I still hang with friends I met at MIND.” (Joni. Personal Interview. 28 October 2004.)

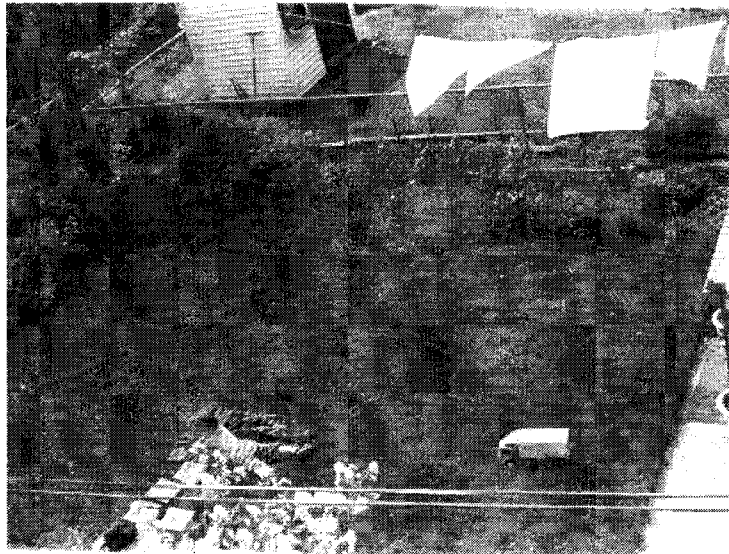
In the third interview, Joni began by talking about her family. “Dad is Jewish as is my Mother. My mom’s dad was a black Ethiopian Jew. He went to London. His wife, my grandmother, is still alive. She lives out in the country on the horse farm with my mom. I’ve known her all my life. I don’t go to church. I don’t know if I believe. Sometimes I think believing in God would be a nice thing. I find spirituality in nature. I find religion interesting in how it can organize people

Joni: Photo Table



“My parents seperated when I was eight. I went back and forth from country to city.”

Figure 22



“Kids are growing up way faster now...”

Figure 23

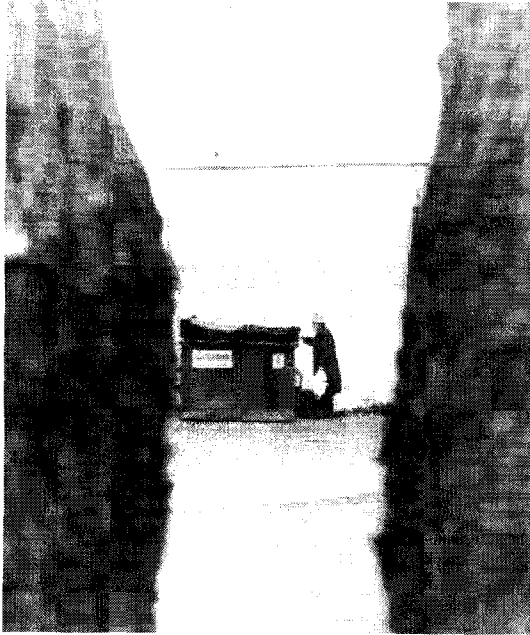


Figure 24

"I never really had a camera before...I always shot by myself."



Figure 25

"This shot and the teen angst one helped me to get my portfolio to apply for college going."



Figure 26

“This was also for my portfolio.”

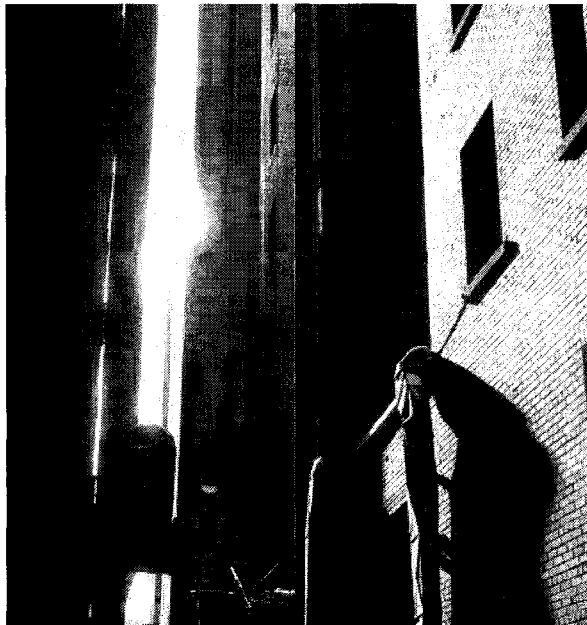


Figure 27

“I like this shot, one of my first really good ones. It has a good feel to it and I’m in this photo composition.”



into doing things. Traveling is so amazing. When I'm getting on a train I feel in motion and when I arrive in a new place I just feel bombarded. Going to a post office is new, everything is new, it's amazing! A total challenge! I like being a foreigner. The NGO work I was involved in when I was traveling was OK, but not great. You go there but I never felt like I accomplished much. Cultural exchange programs kind of work. But do they really work?"

"Is media violence getting worse?" I asked. Joni replied, "The media will always sell violence—youth violence. This violence is not caused by just one thing. Video games are a lot more real now with the increased graphic violence. As for the future, I'm still a kid and still can't figure it out! Kids are growing up way faster now and adults are staying younger longer. All that will be left of work here is in the service industry as everything gets shipped out to India."

(Joni. Personal Interview. 11 November 2004.)

Joni Photo Interview

I asked Joni if she had known what photojournalism was before coming to LOVE. She replied, "Did I know what photojournalism was before I came into the program? Probably not. For me, it's a definition based on time. You are taking shots of things that actually happened whereas documentary photography is more of a long-term project. These are not clear distinctions. At MIND, we did a little bit of photography since they had a small darkroom. We learned to make

black and white prints there. The teacher developed the film and we printed. I prefer shooting compared to working with the chemicals in the darkroom. I like manipulating and putting images together.

“I came into LOVE in the fall of 1998. I never really had a camera before, but I used the point and shoot camera that was given to us. The following January, I received a Minolta single lens reflex camera to shoot with. I always shot by myself. I didn’t really study photography too much then but I did look for ideas in magazines especially when I became a student at college.

“The shots the alley and the teen angst one helped me get my portfolio to apply to college going. I was going to apply to social science, but I changed to creative arts and then finally made my first choice photography. I was much younger than the other students—I was 16 and the average class age was 24. I still managed in the end to receive awards when I finished from both the career programs and photography departments for high marks. I think the best thing about the Photojournalism Project is that you get to do—the fact that you can put pictures together as well as doing the outreaches. It was a tough challenge to do the outreaches but a very rewarding experience..” (Joni. Personal Interview. 4 November 2004.)

Dangerous Journeys

I should have never taken advantage of such a nice day. But who knew that walking to school in the sunshine would be such a dangerous journey. It was one of the first nice days of spring, the green grass had finally appeared in Montreal. I decided to take a different route to school, a route that would get me off the dreary metro(subway) and onto the warm streets of Montreal. I never thought twice about walking on a downtown street by myself at 8:30 in the morning. I should have.

I was walking up Stanley St. below St. Catherine. There weren’t many people on the street except for some quick-walking business people, but fear never crossed my mind. I felt safe, the sun was shining and spring had finally arrived. However, my pleasant walk quickly turned to disaster as two young men approached or rather yelled at me to come their way. I guess they didn’t like the

look of my face or I gave them some kind of look because soon these men grabbed me off the street and threw me into the alley, I remember the stink of cheap beer that was coming off their tongues as they told me “how a girl should act.” I felt the coolness of the day as they bounced around the dark alley, everything seemed to cloud over as I was held down and fists and feet hit my body.

I left that alley with a body splashed with bruises, a puffy right eye and blood trickling from between my lips, I found that the sun didn’t shine as bright and the air wasn’t as crisp with the scent of spring.

If I could have changed that day it would have rained and snowed with huge gusts of winds coming from the north that would have chased everybody inside. Because of the lousy weather I would have taken the metro like any other day. On that metro I would have seen some people from school who I would have chatted with about the math test. It would have been like any other day, but that would have been perfect

(published in *One LOVE*, Summer, 1999)

4.6 Kristy Portrait (not her real name)

Introduction

Kristy, 24, is currently on an NGO field trip experience in Latin America. Her first video, *Through Our Eyes*, was featured at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts LOVE exhibition in 2002. I met Kristy around the time that the LOVE Photojournalism Project was becoming known in the Montreal community as an effective creative arts-based program. In the beginning, as one of the cofounders, I had to literally call around to schools, youth clubs, and social service agencies to find teens to participate, but eventually we were constantly receiving referrals of teens who people thought would benefit by being involved in the Photojournalism Project. Kristy was one of the teens who quietly, and at first reluctantly, became involved with us. Ironically, I don’t really remember her interview or her initial entry into the group and after the first interview for this study it is not hard to understand why. As Kristy puts it in a recent letter to all of us at LOVE, “When I came to LOVE I was fifteen. I wore baggy pants and

sweaters that were too big for me and I always had my hood on and never spoke.” In her words, Kristy “lived in the shadows”. When a young person is surrounded by violence, there is no choice but to learn to “live in the shadows”. This is how you protect yourself. This is how you go about your daily life. This is how you survive. You stay in the shadows and only speak when spoken to. That Kristy has been able to gradually move on with her life is a testament to the enormous inner strength that she has had to frequently call on in order to survive the hurt, pain and disappointment that has been bestowed upon her at various times in her life.

Kristy Portrait

In the first interview, I proceeded to ask Kristy why she thought I had chosen to include her in my study. “You picked me because I’ve been involved for six years as a LOVE youth leader. I feel I’ve had a lifetime of pain and I’ve gotten over it. That’s what I think is the main reason, because I’ve come from somewhere that is lower than dirt and risen above everything.”

Kristy continued with her childhood memories. “I was born in Montreal and raised in Kanawake, a Native American reservation on the south shore of Montreal. I have five sisters. I’m the second youngest. I lived with my step-sister, which was both awkward and difficult. From the age of two to eleven my life in Kanawake was hell! It was ghetto! We lived in the ghetto on dirt roads. I was picked on a lot for being a half-breed, my dad is White and my mother Native American.”

She continued, “I was always scared. I don’t remember not being scared! At elementary school I was picked on all the time for being Native. I was bussed into one of the schools I attended. No other kids in my area got on the bus. I had

four girlfriends and they were trouble and I was trouble. Mix trouble with trouble you get evil. We did a lot of bad things. I was maybe in grade five and had no curfew. We broke into houses and stole a lot of money and drugs from those. We just did a lot of stupid stuff, even stole a car. It was one of my friend's uncle's cars and we went for a joyride. There were lots of drugs constantly even though I was only 10-years-old. I was very confused. I was too scared to go home and maybe get beat up by my step-dad and I didn't want to go to school with those different kids and get beat up. So, I would just go out with my friends and get in trouble.

“Drugs were easy to get. I was addicted to crack at age 10. My stepfather, he actually beat me. One time, he was whipping me but I was high and just laughed. My mother didn't stop the abuse. When we were young we thought she didn't know, but once we were older we knew she would hear us getting the beatings and she wouldn't do anything. My sisters and I we were all doing drugs, all screwed up, we tried to get her attention but she didn't bother. She never came to intervene. We were all scared of him, my step-dad.

“Now my Mom and I are trying to talk again, after three years passed we finally talked. ‘I think I love you but I hate you’ is what I told her. She said she was real sorry but, she's still with him. She says she can't be alone but we said if you left him we would be with you. My real father got remarried after the divorce from my mother. He didn't love my mother; she's difficult to get along with. I see photos of my step-mom holding me when I was a little kid. She feels more like my mom. She taught me everything. One time my mother said she would take care of us but a week later she was gone.”

At this point Kristy recalled her school experience. “In elementary school, I got As. I liked school when I was in class because at least my stepfather wasn't

there so I wasn't getting hurt. The kids on the other hand were always mean to me outside of class. One time they built a snow mountain and buried me in there. I was terrified at recess, lunch hours and getting on the bus after school.

“High school was completely different. I liked art. I liked doing collages—still do. I did pictures of me in the country with my mother and father, the perfect family. I went back and forth on the bus to school from Kanawake in the country into the city. I moved to Montreal and continued on at Coronation School. It was culture shock! There were Black people, Asian people, light-skinned Black people! That was grade six. No one asked me what culture I was. That felt good. I was shocked. There were no Black teachers where I had previously gone to school so it was very different. Most of my friends were from different races because I really wanted to get to know other people. They never made fun of me. They called me Smokey because I was a young smoker.

“I then went to a downtown high school. It was rumors. Rumors about you, about someone else; now school was a popularity trip. I was lucky I knew some people. I became a bully. I always wanted to fight. The principal hated me. I started fights. Don't mess with me. I was in grade seven. Everybody was afraid of me. I would fight anybody, even guys. I would go to school dances and get drunk. I was already used to doing it. I didn't have any friends in high school because I wanted to fight so I never had any long-term friendships.

“By this time I was living in a group foster home. My father freaked out because he had never lived with one of his own children and I was constantly in trouble at school. I shot a desk at my French teacher and they were going to press charges against me so my father, who by now was fed up, let me go to a group home. In the group home, I got in a fight the very first day. If you fight, you go to another group home with extra time. A girl called me a bitch and I said 'I'm

not anybody's bitch!' So we fought and then it was over. She was bleeding, and I was bleeding. This was at a Salvation Army group home.

"For high school, I eventually went to Venture, a small alternative school. It was different there. The Head Teacher and Principal already knew what I had done and they said to me 'Just do your work and go home. Don't come to school drunk or stoned'. By this time, I didn't really care about other people or about myself, but I wanted to go home so I started to change. My grades weren't 80s or 90s but I was passing. I liked the closeness of the school and I didn't have to worry about popularity. I didn't have to worry about lots of kids. My French teacher was very understanding and realized I didn't come from a French neighborhood, so I stayed after class and she taught me more and I was able to pass. I did two years at Venture, then two more years at Options (another alternative high school), then I dropped out.

"My memory was shot. I was taking drugs and I was in my own world. I was also in LOVE and as I started to talk about other things it (the abuse) started to come out. I was in court three years with that, testifying against my step dad for the abuse he put us through. My step-dad eventually left my Mom.

"My history teacher was a jackass. I had been called savage my whole life and it was difficult to hear this word in class. He would insist on calling Native people 'savages'. I warned him and told him not to say it out in class, but everyday he would just go on. One day I stood up and called him dirty names. 'How would you like to be called a faggot! You're an asshole calling me that! I'm the only Native person in the class.' After that incident I left the school.

"My parents kicked me out of the house and I went to live with my grandmother. My parents would give me money every week. I wasn't sure if I was going back to school, but you had to be in school to be in LOVE. I felt safe

in LOVE. I didn't talk about my problems. I didn't put my name on my poetry. I can't even imagine what I was like at 14, now that I'm somewhat mature at 20. I went to Outreach school and passed everything but grade 10 history. I liked it a lot better and I graduated from there. I came to a point in life where I was sick of what I was doing, drinking, smoking. I finished high school. I had always skipped history after that experience with the other teacher. I questioned whether it was the real history or not. My grandmother told me the real history. They extinguished native people, they wanted us to be Christians and they put us on little reservations. The history teacher at this school was different. She said that is the right history. She said 'come to class' and the next year I analyzed history. I learned that the people who write the history books are always the winners.

"I was doing artwork but nothing special. I wasn't really into it because I was always doing something wrong. That's what amazed me. You gave us cameras—us, drug dependant teens. I was able to document my life. This is what I see. It was the photography that attracted me. I never really wrote. I remember when one of my poems was read out loud. I was shaking. I got my first compliment for something I did. I went around taking pictures and I was able to show people what I have seen..

"My grandmother was trying to teach me about Native culture, but I was mixed up. I didn't know whether I was Native or French. I still feel that I'm not either culture. I'm comfortable with who I've become. I would be interested in

The Dark House

Anonymous, 15

I look at the dark road
that leads to the dark house
and behind the dark doors
is a family that can't speak
a family with dark problems
that only the children know of
and the mother can't see
the pain of the child
that can't speak of the fear
the fear that forces children to smile,
to laugh, to love
and the dark sky above
that dark house is the only world
they know of
the only world they don't want
the world they don't need
the dark road
that leads to the dark house
with a family that can't speak and
can't sleep in the dark.

published in *The Courage To Change* (2001)

Kristy: Photo Table



Figure 28

“This my second cousin holding a baby. It seems like everyone is having babies, younger and younger. In my mind 16 year olds are not mature enough to have a baby. How could you take care of a baby if you’re still a baby?”



Figure 29

“This guy was my boyfriend and he was a dealer and he was doing a drug deal.”



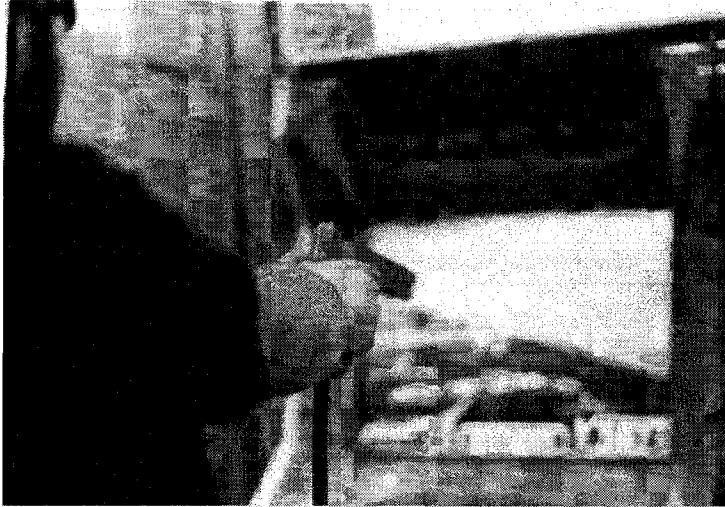
Figure 30

“My first “streeter”, a series about sex appeal and multimedia for the LOVE newspaper.”



Figure 31

“There was a fire by Westmount Park. I was shocked at how it just happened. It looked depressing, those people had no homes now. I showed my LOVE media pass and they allowed me to take pictures so I got that shot.”



“This shot was in the arcade with Andrew. We liked to shoot and play cool games.”

Figure 32



“This is what youth do, play arcade games. He started playing and I took pictures.”

Figure 33



learning more about my culture but I don't need it to back me up like so many Native people do." (Kristy. Personal Interview. 21 November 2004.)

Kristy Photo Interview

When I was recruited into the Photojournalism Project through my school guidance counselor, I thought I was just taking pictures. I didn't know what photojournalism was. I never really took pictures before except for some snapshots at my grandparents on Christmas Day. I did all the different phases of Photojournalism Project. It took the staff a little time to handle me because when I got there I felt it was dangerous for me and I was a little hyper. I learned how to both load and develop film. I never knew it would be that dark in there to load the film. I was very impatient. I wanted to see it right away. This is so cool! This was something I had never seen or done before. When you're loading the film, you can't see your hands in front of you and it took a little time to mix the chemicals. When I started watching the prints come to life in the chemicals, it was like wow! It was very exciting!

"I actually started to shoot only after I had come in the following week and everybody had taken pictures and had brought in film to develop. I felt disappointed that I hadn't tried. So I started. Once my first roll was done, I took pictures of everything, drugs, guys, family, around my house. It was fun, so I bought into taking pictures, and I was surprised that I could be that creative.

“I never thought that photography was creative. I thought I was just taking a picture to see what it was. It was fun to see what kind of message I was going to put out. I thought I was being creative by showing people what something is like. To me, I’m saying something. If I took a picture of something like drugs, I was able to show people and think about. I just wanted to create constantly. I would take a picture just because I wanted to take a picture. My parents didn’t really understand it at first.

“My Dad, the way he saw things, was that you can’t change and I was a bad seed. I was constantly getting in trouble and for this organization to come into my life and change me when he couldn’t change me, well, he just didn’t think it was possible. At first he thought I was just acting. He realized when I started to speak out against violence and doing outreaches in schools that LOVE was good. When I quit LOVE, he said, that ‘how could I quit it changed your life and our life’. I’ll always be involved and do outreaches when I can if I’m needed. I changed a lot. I’ve asked myself how did LOVE change me? I was shadowed all my life. I never wanted to be seen before living in the shadows.”

As we started to put the photos in chronological order, Kristy spoke quite freely about her experience in the Photojournalism Project and the work she produced. “The writing and the photography and being surrounded with other people with similar experience all worked for me. I started writing a story about what it was like to be in LOVE. It was like day and night my life changes. I think you guys caught us by surprise during the dark days. Nobody wanted to listen to us. It went from that to ‘Don’t censor yourself. Write and we’ll put it in the paper’. I learned so much from photography. I shot all the time, even walking to school because there was always something. The camera became an unconscious thing and I would just grab it. Scary, I was on every page of the newspaper and I

thought my parents would pick it out. I showed them the newspaper, but I wrote my story as ‘anonymous’, so they never knew. They couldn’t pick it out. I was excited but afraid. This is my work and I was used to staying in the back. I was encouraged and people were amazed. I was just constantly writing three or four pages a day. My memories are enough pain, so I’m glad I never had a journal. A lot of things I don’t remember anyways.”... (Kristy. Personal Interview. 28 November 2004.)

4.7 Andrew Portrait

Introduction

Andrew, 20, was born in Toronto, Ontario, and is currently employed full-time at LOVE as a Program Coordinator. Andrew leads workshops and teaches photography to the youth in the Photojournalism Project as well as to elementary and high school students in the LOVE Permanent Presence Committees established throughout school systems in the Montreal region. I met Andrew when he was 15-years-old. For me, one of the most lasting first impressions of Andrew’s early years in LOVE years was the candid response he always gave someone when he was asked why he joined the Photojournalism Project. Andrew never hesitated to answer that the only reason he joined was to obtain the free camera and film that all Photojournalism Project participants receive once they are selected to participate in the project. In fact, Andrew had tagged along with another LOVE youth who was already coming to Dawson College for the required Photojournalism pre-selection interview held with LOVE staff. He also became interested and decided to join. Andrew’s experience within the LOVE community has evolved from Photojournalism Project participant, to community and school outreach spokesperson, to youth leader and finally, his current role as the photography workshop leader in the Photojournalism Project in Montreal.

Andrew Portrait

In the first interview, Andrew began by telling his childhood memories. “I was born in Toronto where I lived until I was about 10-years-old. I went to a Catholic school where I was picked on a lot because I was a big kid for my age. I lived in a housing complex that I’ve known all my life. I lived with my dad and great-grandparents for most of those years. My dad was also raised by my grandmother. I had a very strict Catholic childhood and even went to a Spanish-speaking Catholic school. I did all the usual stuff religion wise, such as catechisms and what not. My father was born in Uruguay but moved to Canada when he was 16. I was the only child at this time and my father spent most of his time working while my grandparents raised me. My father was very, very strict. Now I have four siblings, all of them younger than me. I think I have a good understanding of kids and I appreciate them more.

“My neighborhood was a relatively safe one but my father would complain about the ‘Pakis and Indians moving in’. These people, he said, were destroying the neighborhood. My most memorable incident of this time of life was when my bike was stolen and I went to the kid who had taken it. He denied taking it and I remember he hit me when I confronted him about it. I never told my father about this because he believed that I had to learn to take care of things myself as well as defend myself.

“When my mother and father separated, my mother left Toronto and went to live in Montreal with my grandmother. It was at this time, when I was around the age of eight, that I started going back and forth between Montreal and Toronto on the train by myself to visit my mother. I enjoyed these trips and I would talk to the other passengers and have some fun with these trips.

“Around the age of 10, I actually moved to Montreal to live with my mother. I ended up missing out on at least a half year out of school just waiting to get into a school. I eventually went back to school, another Catholic one. My mother moved to a neighborhood in which I was the only Spanish-speaking kid in my neighborhood. Most of the kids were Italian. At the school I was always getting in trouble. I was always a big kid and very warm-blooded, so I always went to school in shorts, even in winter. The administration didn’t really appreciate this fact and didn’t like me to dress this way.

“My mother moved again to a more English speaking area, so of course I changed schools again. At this new school I also got into trouble. Looking back, I realize that whereas my father had been very strict, living with my mother I had more freedom. This meant I didn’t worry about homework and school so I started to get into more trouble.

“Interestingly enough, in Toronto I never really got into trouble at school because I was sort of a teacher’s pet and got good marks. This was because of my father’s strictness about school. Again, I was big, and I was more or less ‘top dog’ in the schoolyard. Nobody bothered me.

“It wasn’t like this in my newest school. There was no safety net anymore and one day another big kid named Matthew put me in a sleeper wrestling hold and I passed out. Eventually Matthew and I became best friends and it is from him that I learned about the ‘code of ethics’. By this I mean (that) I learned what it meant to be an ‘honorable thug’. I became interested in chivalry and got into the King Arthur mythology and the code of honor. We protected the younger and weaker kids in the lower grades. This was grade six and I became part of a gang of five or guys and things really changed. I had lots of freedom with my mother and school fell by the wayside. Me and the guys got into trouble all the time. We

would hang kids out the windows and break windows. The principal by then had little use for our presence in the school or even the classroom. She would send us guys off to do work with the janitor. I found out a few years later when I met the janitor that this is what the principal would do with the bad kids. She would get rid of them by sending them to him. At this point we weren't learning shit!

Andrew: Photo Table



Figure 34

“When I started to take pictures I began a series about reflections.”

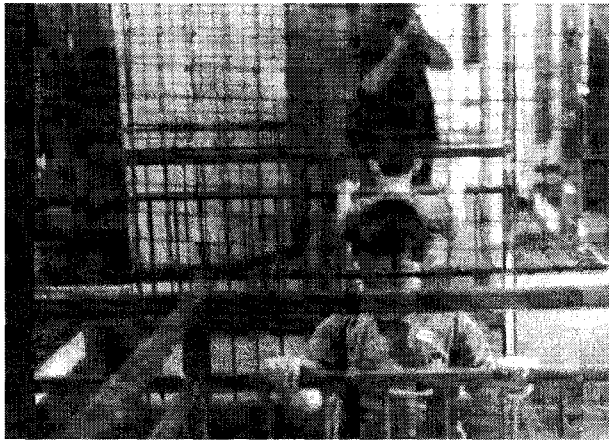


Figure 35

“I started to see myself in my little brother.”



“I became interested in the code of honor.”

Figure 36



“My best friend’s father has a country place that I go to every summer.”

Figure 37



Figure 38

“I went out to take pictures at events all the time. This is a hockey celebration on the streets of Montreal.”

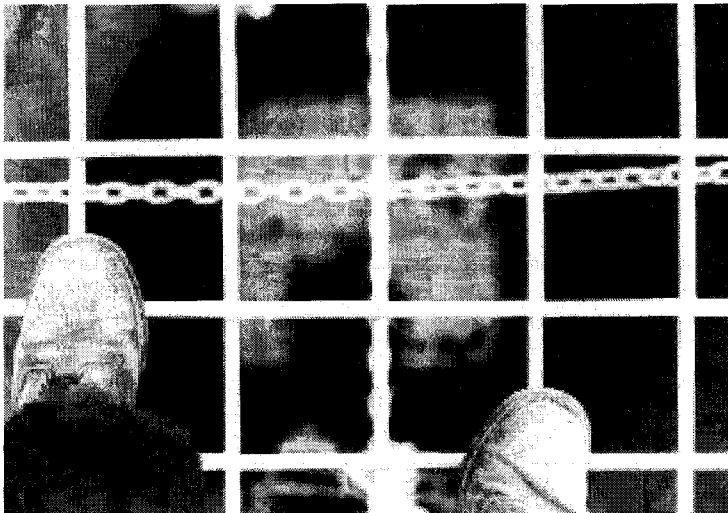


Figure 39

“This shot was in the LOVE exhibit at the Musee des Beaux-Arts in 2002.”



I AM FEAR

I am the shadows in the night.

I am the darkness against the light.

I am the lonely day when friends aren't near.

I am frustration. I am fear.

I am the monsters under the bed.

I am all the worries inside your head.

“Somehow, by miracles of miracles, we graduated grade six and were shipped off to a school with uniforms and a big picture of Sir Winston Churchill in the hallway. The teacher or guidance counselor said we would do better there because they had better social programs to help kids like us. I remember my mother had to scrape up the money for me to attend this school. By this time, at 14 years-old, I was out of control. I was in lots of fights, getting detentions and suspensions, drinking, smoking marijuana and cigarettes during lunchtime. I wasn’t well known to the police as a violent person but more as a general troublemaker. I was still going back and forth to Toronto to see my Dad but most of the time I was in Montreal with my mother and her boyfriend.” (Andrew. Personal Interview. 23 June 2004.)

I started the third interview by asking Andrew about his religious beliefs. “As far as religion goes, even though I was brought up for the first 10 years of my life in a very strict Catholic environment on a daily basis now I don’t even think about church. I don’t go to church anymore. I was dragged along by my family. I went to church until I was 12 or 13. I do believe in something, something much bigger than us. I also believe you can do things and that you change the world.”

When we moved onto other topics, such as politics Andrew offered, “Politics I’m not that knowledgeable about. I stay abreast of everything in the news and I do find that being involved with LOVE is political, especially issues of media

violence. I also understand there is a political side to everything. For example, when we had our Photojournalism exhibit at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, I understood that the interest in having our exhibit was about bringing more young people through their doors. Also, we've formed several partnerships with corporations and their motivation was similar in that they could show their interest in young people by working with LOVE youth. I also have been to Ottawa to meet with government officials for funding and that has given me insight into the behind the door stuff.

“There has been a change in society’s awareness about violence—in particular youth violence—although to me to talk about the ‘youth problem’ sounds retarded. Video games are totally more violent now and music is more expressive. I play video games and I think that the developers have made them more violent from when I first started playing them 10 years ago. Is there a link to violence? I would say that the games are not supervised properly. Little kids 10 or 12 year olds get their hands on them and the parents don’t supervise them. The parents don’t read the information nor do they really seem to care. The kids get lost in them. When I first played Nintendo, it was a four button controller. Now X-Box has GTA [Grand Theft Auto], a 10 button violent game. The parents don’t read the fine print and the video store owners let kids rent them so there’s no supervision at any level and the kids become desensitized to the violence in the games. The same goes for the movies.” (Andrew. Personal Interview. 21 August 2004.)

Andrew Photo Interview

Andrew had more film to go through than any of my other study participants, and his recall of the over one hundred rolls of black and white films was

outstanding. Andrew was proud of the images showing reflections of himself that he first started when he came into the Photojournalism Project. As well, Andrew went out often as a photojournalist to take pictures of different events in the city streets. He continues to have a passion for photography and now in his role as Photojournalism Project photography teacher he is also quite proud to say that he has replaced me as the LOVE photography teacher. (Andrew, Personal Interview, 8 July 2004.)

4.8 Gary Portrait

Introduction

Gary, 25, was born and raised in the United States and now calls Montreal home. Gary has played an integral role in the development of LOVE in his role as a Youth Leader. He has shown his leadership capacity at the LOVE Leadership Camp held each summer north of Toronto in Haliburton, Ontario. He is currently working at Macdonald's and at the Montreal General Hospital.

When I was introduced to Gary, it was during the first summer session of Photojournalism Project. I had always thought that the Photojournalism Project could thrive during the summer because many teens don't get summer jobs, take family summer vacations, or as one youth said, don't even get the offer to participate in programs like the Photojournalism Project. Gary had just arrived from New York City and when he showed up for his interview I simply told him, 'We need you here.' Gary had just survived several personal experiences with violence. Like so many inner city youth, Gary's had fallen victim to the gangs, the drugs and the senseless violence that often surrounds so many young black inner city youth. Somehow, though, Gary has been able to find a sanctuary in his writing, mostly poetry. That Gary realized the power of the pen over the gun was actually an anomaly. A young black male who loves to write poetry. The

Photojournalism Project served as a much-needed sanctuary so Gary could tell his story. On the way to doing so, he has been able to convey a message of hope for the future—a message we all need to hear..

Gary Portrait

I asked Gary, “Why do you think I picked you to be in my study?”

He replied, “There are different reasons why you picked me, I think. My understanding of what I’ve been through and also what I’ve put into the program. Knowing that you and me have an understanding. You called me out of the blue and now we’re just sharing even though we haven’t met for awhile. I always tell people that you’ve been like a father to me from the time that I’ve known you.

“I think back to the reason why I don’t want to take a plane or get in an elevator. When I was very young, I can remember watching from my apartment building on the 17th floor. Someone jumped from another building balcony and I had just witnessed the person’s death. I looked down and I saw the body and the people starting to gather around. My uncle came and said that this woman had committed suicide. Since then, I’ve never wanted to fly. I have a fear of flying or getting up in elevators. I live in the basement now. I even told my mom that we couldn’t move to the fifth floor.

“That incident happened when I lived in Chicago. I was born in New York city but for a short time I lived in St. Vincent with my grandparents. I then came back and lived in Chicago. As a little kid...I was such a little kid. I’m still like a kid now. I have little teddy bears and toys hanging around my room. I’m stubborn but mostly quiet.

“In St. Vincent, I can remember my grandparents taking me to the beach in the morning. Then going back in the afternoon. There were less cars moving

around and people were different. I can remember going out in the boat, it was pretty nice. Even now when I visit New York, I want to drink coconut water because it reminds me of St. Vincent where my grandparents made it fresh. I lived with them there while my mother went out to work. They took care of me.

“My mother stayed in St. Vincent for a while but I went on back to New York City and stayed with my grandparents and my uncles. Eventually my mother started to come back to New York, but she didn’t like it. Life was too fast pace, so she came to Canada and stayed with my cousin. She eventually started to live here in Montreal. It was weird for me because I was used to being in the big cities in the United States. I traveled all the time to Philadelphia and New York. When you come here, there’s less cops, less ambulances, much more quiet. I started to understand what she was talking about. It was good and nice and quiet over here. During my first winter here in Montreal there was an ice storm, and as soon as the ice storm was finished I was back home in the United States.

“My grandparents had lived in Brooklyn in the same house for twenty-five years. I got used to being in that one house, then in the summers I would go to Chicago and Philadelphia and see my family there. Even now, people always want to know why I’m traveling all the time, I figure if I have the opportunity to get away for the weekend, I go.

“My elementary school was safe and everybody got along. In high school that’s when you really get a different ball game. You have to defend yourself. If you are not in the group you try to get through the day not tipping on anyone, not stomping on feet, and you sit and eat your lunch quietly. I was pretty good in school. It wasn’t a problem at all, just read my books, studying, just doing what I had to do.

“When I came here to the French school, I had to go to a welcome class

where they try to teach you French. There were a lot fights, pretty ridiculous and I eventually told my mom I had to get out. They gave me some tests and sent me out to a high school where the kids had a uniform. I got into some sports, drama and poetry. I always kept myself busy so that's what I did after school.

“The only thing was once I had a run-in with a couple of guys. There were some skinhead guys who sold drugs at my school. I was kind of used to these types in the United States. Some of these kids had parents who thought that they were perfect. But that was a joke. They never bothered me in the end because they heard I was from New York, so they saw stuff about life there on TV. They used to harass me but now I see some of these guys come in at Macdonald's. One time they threatened me with a needle. In front of the school these guys look clean, but around the corner they're dirty. I told them I would call the cops. They thought they were big bullies but they didn't scare me. One of the guys understood where I was coming from and realized how crazy things were getting. I called them on it and they backed down.

“I work nights at McDonalds's, so I see a lot of weird people come in and sometimes I still see those guys. Overnight I always get people who want to give me shit. They come in and, even if they pay, we can still throw them out. We tell the customers 'wait a minute' and we take care of the situation.

“Since I came to Montreal I was still like a little kid. Most of my poetry, I pull it from childhood. I was always quiet. I would stay in my room and write, or watch my grandmother cook. I know guys who can't even cook, but I do. I wouldn't mind speaking out to people, but I'm going to put it on paper. I'd rather write it out.

“I never expected to come to Montreal and be writing poetry with LOVE. My

first girlfriend I had known since I was six, and we went out for three and a half years. Her mother called me to tell me she got shot. She was with my friend, he was doing drugs and owed out some money. They were chilling at the house, getting high and when the guys who he owed money to shot them. She died. He's still living and paralyzed. He knows who did it but he was too scared to tell the police. It was around that time I joined LOVE. During that quietness, I was recovering and reflecting. I still work with LOVE, work with kids and write.

“I didn't know my dad at the time when I lived in the States. My mother had two little girls since she lived in Montreal. I feel like a father to them; they cling on me. It's going to be two years this August that my dad passed away. I always wondered why I didn't have the perfect family. I look on TV and see that, but not me, I always wondered where he was. My grandmother searched for him and found him. That day when I met him I was surprised. I was 14 and we went shopping. After that day, I would call him but they'd always say he's not home or he just stepped out. A couple of years later, my grandmother called to tell me that I needed a blood test. Apparently my Dad had sickle cell anemia and maybe his kids had it. A couple of months later he had an operation. I didn't really want to hear about. I went to visit him when he was in the hospital and there were five other kids in the room. I didn't know who they were. They were Dad's other kids.

Gary: Poetry

He survived and he introduced them all to me so that when they came to the hospital, I'm sitting there and they're talking about Dad, 'He did this for my birthday and bought me this at Christmas.' They were getting gifts and postcards. I felt left out. It got to my head so that I can't care much about him. At this point I didn't want to go over that again. I already had just lost someone, my girlfriend.

“The doctor told my grandmother that it was up to the kids. What were we going to do about taking care of him? He went into a coma, came out, and went back in. They said they don't know if he'll come out. It turns out it was left up to me and a sister to pull the plug. She didn't want to do it. Me, I went to my Dad's house to get a feeling of the atmosphere and tried to imagine myself being there. The next day, I went to pull the plug and then they came after me, all the brothers

I AM ANGER

I am anger.
I am danger.
I am the sour stranger.
I am anger.
I am yelling. I am fighting.
I am a big bad bolt of lightning.
I am anger.
And I know it's absurd,
But I'm stranger after I hear all the hurtful words.

I am anger.
I am danger.
I am the sour stranger.
I am the stress
That makes life a mess.
I must confess that I'll never be less
As long as people feed me.

I AM HOPE

I am the moon on the darkest night
I am the courage when you feel the most fright.
I am the second chance when you're ready to quit.

I am hope. I'm a way of the pit.
I am the reassuring voice on the telephone.
I am the hug when we feel alone.
I am the map when you are lost.
I am hope. I will melt the frost.
I am hope. Do not despair.
I am hope. I am everywhere.
Yesterday, there was hope.
Today, there is hope.
Tomorrow there shall be hope.



and sisters. For a while, they questioned why should I have been the one to do it.

“Nowadays they call me to come down to visit but I just listen to their conference calls. I’m saying, ‘You guys are sharing but I only saw him for two hours, I thought my father was gone all this time’. He was 52 and at least they got a postcard. It was a turning point in my life around that time. You learn that one day you’re jumping around happy and the next day you’re crying.

“I had to have surgery after a run in with a customer at Macdonald’s one night. They have a lot of bums who come in and they harass the people, so we have to ask them to leave. (One of them) hit me in the face with a chair and I’ve had to have some surgery on my jaws and teeth. But everything is OK. I’m smoothing it out now, enjoying life, my mom and my little sisters. I’ve been doing a lot of traveling around. Ottawa is pretty nice. Me and my friend, we drive there and we always go to Toronto. The clubbing in Toronto is not bad, but it’s getting more aggressive towards you; if you bump somebody you could quickly be in a fight.

“I’ve been at Macdonald’s for three years and I’m at a management stage now, but it’s a big responsibility to be the manager. Sometimes it all looks very stressed. I still work at the hospital with the mentally challenged people. I like helping out people. After Mac, I go there. I’d like to be there full-time. Both of them know me and need me.

“The media plays their part in the violence, some of these young artists are really young and they influence the younger kids, especially with their showing so much of their body parts on TV. The young girls with the different color bracelets. Now and again I drink. I can’t sit there every day and drink. I’ve been dating a Middle Eastern girl for two and a half years. I met her through work at Macdonald’s. At first I was rude to her and she thought that I was a mean-spirited guy. A lot of people don’t know about us. I don’t feel everyone has to know. I met her mom and dad. At first they’re not talking about me because of that Middle Eastern thing about choosing someone for their daughter. Now her mom calls me up looking for her and they explained their religion to me.(Gary. Personal Interview, 13 July, 2004.)

Gary Photo Interview

Although the Photojournalism Project rule was that the teens participated in both the writing and the photography activities, there were a few who, for various reasons, would end up doing only one of them. Gary was one of the teens who preferred to write, and his passion for and strength in writing downplayed his lack of interest in entering into the photo lab. We had a brief second interview (Interview, December 5, 2004) where I gave Gary a camera and film and encouraged him to take pictures this time. Unfortunately, he wasn’t able to follow up with our plan since he became both fully employed and engaged to be married. These poems were selected as a worthy representation of his writing.

I AM FEAR

I am the shadows in the night.
I am the darkness against the light.
I am the lonely day when friends aren’t near.
I am frustration. I am fear.
I am the monsters under the bed.
I am all the worries inside your head.
I am every drop of every tear. I am the fever.

I am fear.
I am the failure that we all dread.
I am the dark cloud of luck that hangs by a thread.
I am the ache that won't disappear.
I am the phantom. I am fear.
I am the messenger of change. I am the new start that
seems so strange.
I am that silly snicker or sneer.
I am not a friend. I am fear.

4.9 Michael Portrait

Introduction

Michael, 21, has been working as a photojournalist for a community newspaper and a freelance photographer. One successful element that evolved within the Photojournalism Project was the notion of relationship-building. Engaging young people in a community-based after-school project is, under normal circumstances, a daunting challenge. Providing a successful learning experience with teens whose lives have been touched by violence was attained by embracing and building strong relationships. Thus, with each Photojournalism Project participant, the relationship that evolved was unique. In Michael's case, my introduction to him was highlighted by the fact that I had known his father, a former student in Dawson's professional photography program. For this reason, Michael came into the Photojournalism Project eager to learn more about photography and with a desire to become a professional photojournalist. Michael, in fact, prided himself on how much more photography knowledge he had compared to the other LOVE youth. He already understood and could do most of the basic black and white darkroom techniques. For this reason, Michael eventually became our darkroom assistant. I can remember Michael in the darkroom, arms folded and standing very serious and sentinel-like under the glow

of the amber safe light, making sure the darkroom sessions went smoothly and that proper darkroom protocol was being followed by the other LOVE youth.

Michael Portrait

I started the first interview asking Michael why he thought I chose him to be in my study. “You picked me because I’ve been with LOVE for three years and also because of the experience I’ve had with the programs”.

Michael started our first interview by recounting his early childhood. “I can remember as far back as two. I remember when I started school around four. When I was young my parents would wake up early to go to work and I would go to stay at my grandparents. I had no interaction with other kids because I always stayed around the television at their house. When I started school, because of the lack of interaction with other kids, I was always in trouble and always in the corner. I was always a troublemaker, shooting wax crayons at the other kids and that was only the beginning. I was always in trouble.”

Michael then went on to relate his school experience, beginning with his primary years. “Up until grade three I was in the same school, then, during that year I shot a puck at a girl and she had to get stitches. The principal was fed up and transferred me out. From grades three to six, I matured a little bit more and things lightened up. In elementary school, though, when my mother came to pick me up there wasn’t a single day when a kid or a principal didn’t tell her that ‘your son did this or your son did that.’ My father didn’t care much and nor did I. My mother, she was the one who picked me up and she was the one who took all the shit.

“Once I started high school, there were some kids I knew from my elementary school and things went down hill. I did something to a girl in the class and was

suspended for the rest of the school year. The following year, the same thing. They let me write the final exam but put me out. I then went to the Adolescent Treatment Program at the Montreal Children's Hospital. I was referred to the LOVE program from there because of my attitude. The school said one of the ways I could get back into regular school was to participate in the Photojournalism Project. I came into LOVE and started grade 10. I was fooling around and flunked out. Instead of people causing me problems, I caused problems. I thought I was able to do the education part, but I couldn't and that was the payback for me. I started to burn posters, vandalizing lockers and stealing. I even stole from a teacher's purse. I was the only Portuguese in a gang of Italians guys. Right from the lunch table we would do stupid things like shooting pears and apples at the other kids. Mainly guys. Most of the trouble I got into occurred in school but we did occasionally vandalize outside the subway station."

I asked Michael if there was any violence in his neighborhood. "My neighborhood is a very good neighborhood, very Portuguese. There isn't much going on and I've lived there all my life. I am an only child. For me it was a win-win situation, obviously you want a sibling but, you also want all the attention. The majority of my family is in Portugal. I went there when I was 12 and I met many of them."

Michael then recounted his personal experience with the Photojournalism Project. "I wasn't forced to come to LOVE. A teacher knew I liked photography and referred me to it. I started to take pictures when my father was coming to

Micheal: Photo Table



My friendship with Michael began with this shot which he gave to me when he started in the Photojournalism Project.”

Figure 40



“This shot of my father was in an edition of *One Love*, the youth newspaper.”

Figure 41



Figure 42

“I was planning to do a huge project for the LOVE newspaper about substance abuse and teenagers.”



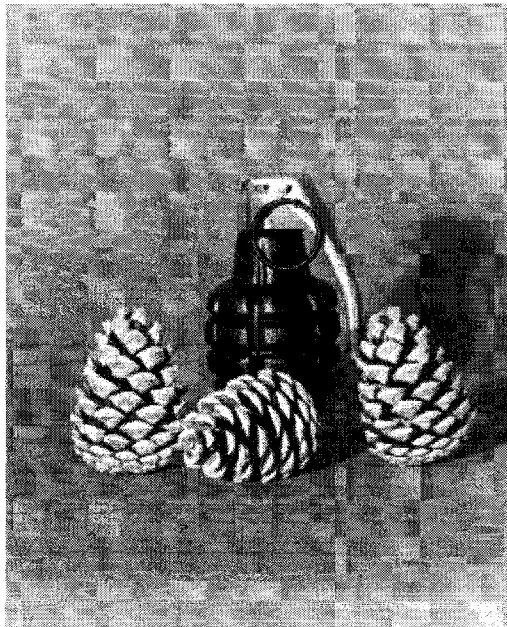
Figure42

“I got my work published in the LOVE newspaper. For me this was a positive experience.”



“This shot was also for the project.”

Figure 43



“Somebody told me the nickname for grenades was pine comb because they look the same.”

Figure 44



Dawson to study. He started by himself. In my uncle's basement, there was a corner where a photographer had a darkroom set up. The writing for the Photojournalism Project I did at home on my computer. A lot of the times I would come and wouldn't talk to anyone. I got used to it. After a half year, I started to integrate more with the other kids. My two experiences at the LOVE Leadership Camp were not good. It was good to be in the country, but my actions pretty well ruined the whole atmosphere of the camp because I attacked a couple of the youth's opinion during the workshops. The second time I hid some photo equipment in my bag, my bag was searched, and the equipment was found. I stole to get back at people. I never stole cars, just little things. I started in elementary school. I did it for revenge, an eye for an eye."

During the third interview Michael preferred to talk mostly about photography. "I was in a relationship, but that ended. I'm not in the mood right now to waste money on girls. I have old friends, but I don't really hang around that much with them. I work in a store and take pictures trying to get a portfolio together. I still use my uncle's basement as a lab. A lot of the work I do I can use home as a studio but for the most part I use the basement. I like photojournalism. My father did studio work. I shoot parades and protests. I am working on a photojournalism portfolio to become a photojournalist and plan to go back to school because of family pressure and also to get a diploma. My father doesn't

really care, but my mother does.” (Michael. Personal Interview, 21 November 2004.)

Michael Photo Interview

“My father was a professional photographer and (I) would go to the World Press Photo exhibits and other exhibits with my father. I’m not in the darkroom too much these days. I do Photoshop now, better than my father. That’s how I did all these shots. When I came into the Photojournalism Project, I knew printing and enlarging. I borrowed my father’s equipment. My main stuff starts here with my shots documenting the making of the video for LOVE. In a way, my writing evolved with LOVE based on personal experience. I took pictures for my writing and for other kids’ stories. I’m a much better photographer now. Before, I always did setup shots. Since the Photojournalism Project, I’ve been doing pictures outside in the real world, Real events. Real life. Since mid- February, I’ve been taking pictures of all kinds of major events. I met Phil (I had arranged for Michael to meet local Montreal photojournalist Phil Carpenter from the local newspaper The Montreal Gazette). The meeting was for an hour. I asked him about financial matters and he explained to me how the pay went for photojournalists. He gave me some technical advice about shooting and invited me to shadow him one weekend. To become an intern, I would have to have better equipment. He said my portfolio was decent considering how much experience I had.”

“There’s a lot to count—49 black and white and another 30 or 40 odd color (Michael was meticulous with all of his work and it was all numbered). The cemetery shot was in the newspaper. (The one of) my father in the lane was one of my favourite shots and also printed in the newspaper. I like the composition

when you are outside shooting. Now it's just develop the film and then the computer. I would like to get a digital camera but they are not cheap. I definitely want to travel and do photojournalism. The LOVE program—it's opened doors for me. I've gotten some press passes to get into parades and also to visit a morgue. Most of my shots with LOVE were candid and I kept the people anonymous. I got my work published in the LOVE newspaper. For me this was a positive experience.” (Michael, Personal Interview. 21 October 2004.)

4.10 Kyra Portrait

Introduction

Kyra, 20, is a graduate of Dawson College's North-South Studies program. This program focuses on bringing about a better understanding of life in developing countries. Kyra traveled to Nicaragua to live and work with the people there.

Kyra was another youth recruited and referred to us from MIND, the alternative school in Montreal's public school system whose philosophy of teaching and learning with young people meshed so well with the philosophy of the LOVE organization. When you first meet Kyra, she exudes the rural country background in which she was raised. Along with her home schooling background, you quickly get a sense of a young person with a brilliant mind, able to think out of the box, so to speak. Kyra has already started to contribute so much to improving our society. In a world facing so many daunting issues, Kyra is proof that there are young people in our communities who are quite capable of asking the right questions in order to wrestle with a variety of issues such as politics, education, the environment, technology, and the influence of the media.

The most recognizable characteristic of Kyra, once you get to know her, and as she so readily admits, is her eagerness to please both family and friends.

Although this has left her vulnerable and caused problems in the past, her need to belong and contribute to her community is still strong. Kyra also exemplifies the need for young people to have a creative outlet for expression especially during the teen years. Kyra has always been involved in the creative arts with her writing and playing guitar. Now she continues this creative expression through spoken word and photography. As a photographer, her images evoke the concerns of many young people about the state of the world today and it is through her creative expressions that we can feel optimistic about the future.

Kyra Portrait

To my lead-in question for the first interview, Kyra answered, “You picked me because I’m pretty active in the photography part of the Photojournalism Project. I really enjoy the photography, so I try to come as often as I can. My past experience will give you a different perspective from other LOVE youth. I think your looking for ‘Kyra in a nutshell’ basically. I was born in Pointe Claire, Lakeshore Hospital, Montreal, August 11, 1987 at 3:57 p.m. I lived in Montreal until I was four.”

As the interview continued, Kyra talked about her family and family life. “Both of my parents were therapists. My mom does alternative medicine and my dad does somewhat more traditional therapy. I also have three brothers. At the end of the 80s, my parents bought a farm and we moved out to the country. It was renovated so they could continue to practice out there. We were four kids. My father also has a son from another marriage, but he never lived with us. We renovated the place so people could stay. We still have it, but I moved from the farm when I was fourteen. My parents separated when I was around eight-years-old. Some of the brothers sided with my mom, some with my dad, it was

confusing, but we stayed with my mom.

“My mom was born in Trinidad and Tobago. My Dad was born in England. My Mom’s family came from Ireland, Scotland and India. My Dad’s parents were orphans so we’re not really sure about their history other than that they were mainly Norwegian and Welsh. When all is said and done, I have a very multicultural background. After they separated, it was difficult for me. I don’t remember my dad that much. He was always working and traveling. He especially worked a lot in Costa Rica. I would join him down there when he did his group work there. There was actually supposed to be joint custody, but he went away. He never sent money and left my mother in debt. He said that if she went after him for money, he would disappear which is easy to do down there. Within a year after divorcing my mom, my dad announced to all that he was getting married. I was upset that he never told us until the last minute but I wrote a letter to him and he responded to that by saying not to communicate with him, that I was like my mother.

“In the city we moved around a lot. I remember having to clean up after my brothers all the time. That started when I was really young. When I was four, we moved to the country. I don’t remember the move that much. It wasn’t a big shock because we were already going down there. My brothers and I were all home-schooled. Home-schooling starts as soon as you are born. Around four-years-old, I started to learn math. We corresponded with a school in Maryland until grade three. My dad was the kind of person who bottled up and then flipped out. I remember he was usually calm but every now and then he would get pissed off at us and flip out and start throwing things. He had no patience whatsoever so my mom did most of the child-rearing and home-schooling. There was also a girl who was kind of a nanny and she took on some of the home schooling. I was

home-schooled until I was in grade 10. Actually I was 'unschooled', which is slightly different. The idea is that the students follow their own schedule and interests. We all learnt the basics and then were encouraged to focus on what we enjoyed most. I did a lot of music, dance, math, geography, and language.

"I was with adults most of the time out at the farm, adults with problems. I would help facilitate the groups, cooking, cleaning and organizing. I never went to doctors because there were always natural alternatives available which were equally effective and without negative side affects. I lived on the farm for 11 years. Once my dad left though, my mom was always working. I became more responsible for my brothers, especially the younger one.

"How did I get from the country to MIND? I was around 13. We always had a hard time with money after he left. He left us with a lot of debt. It was difficult to support us all in the country. My mom finally decided to come back to the city to support us. We wanted to try public school. To get into college and university is much harder if your home schooled and haven't completed high school in a regular part of the system. I also wanted to get a perspective on what the average person of my age has experienced as far as education goes. I found it easy academically when I went to MIND. I met LOVE during this time. My mother had met a new partner and we eventually moved in with him. But that wasn't easy. He was resentful towards us because she had children not with him but with someone else. I made friends easily but that still wasn't a good year. Moving was just too stressful. When I was 13, I had started going out with someone who I met through the home school network. We broke up at 15. It had been an emotionally and trying long-distance relationship, even at 13. Because of my dad leaving us, I had all these men issues, being caused by being afraid of abandonment. It's not so funny when you end up being attracted to people who

are going to do the same things to you. The person was insensitive like my father. I didn't see it while I was with him but I saw it after. I really started to see it.

“When I was living in the country, I had started taking violin lessons. One summer I got offered to go be a stagehand down in Nova Scotia in an opera. My older brother was also invited and he had issues with the people we were staying with. The lady was very controlling and pushy and my brother tended to be a bit slow when he did things. They were always fighting. He felt like I was siding with them. When we got back he would start flipping out. He started hitting me. He got extremely violent towards me both physically and verbally and that continued for at least a year. Even in the city that continued. Our relationship is only now beginning to heal. We had and still have very different personalities and at a certain point I got tired of feeling I had to take care of him. We were in the same classes, so he'd depend on me even for schoolwork. So that also upset me. All this was going on that one year of moving back to Montreal. My brother actually got involved with LOVE before I came in but he didn't go regularly and eventually just stopped altogether. I did a lot writing and wanted to learn photography and meet new people seeing how I didn't have a community here in Montreal. I started a journal when I was eight-years-old. I write in it a lot more often now. I guess it's just a use of excess energy.

“When I was in the country, I don't remember feeling isolated. Mostly it was being Anglophone that caused division. When I was younger I got along well. As we got older, around 10 or 12-years-old, I started realizing kids saw us as weird for being non-white and some would tease us. I had a lot of adult friends who I'd met through my parents' workshops as well as friends my own age from the neighborhood. The racial thing became more difficult as I got older and understood more. I remember a friend and someone said to her ‘what are you

Kyra: Photo Table

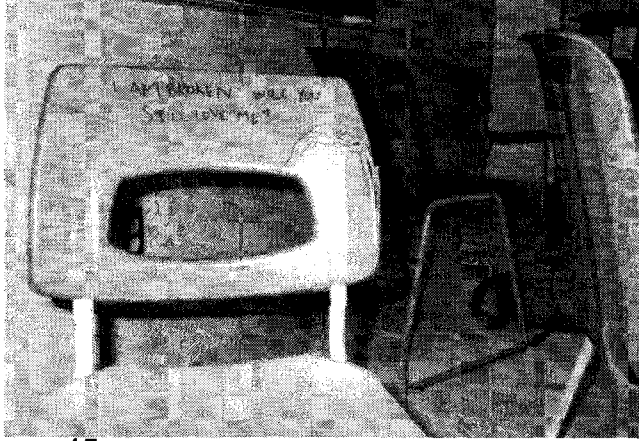


Figure 45

"I write and take pictures, so I would consider myself a photojournalist."

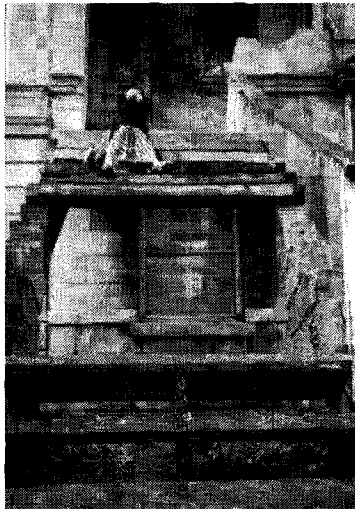


Figure 46

"A lot of the things I take are stationary."



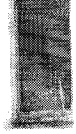
Figure 47

“Whenever I’m walking
I’m scouting for shots.”



Figure 48

“I always knew there was
a problem with the world.”



Fuck the
Police!
A-

"I always have my
camera with me."

Figure 49



"I came to understand
LOVE as a community."

Figure 50

doing hanging out with that nigger?’ That really hurt. Some other preppy boys would give the Indian holler whoop. My friend never really defended that issue and just laughed it off.

“When I was younger I was very eager to please, so I would do anything to make people happy. I made friends very easily but hadn’t learned to respect my own boundaries. I took care of everyone but myself. Even in Montreal, people could never tell where I was from. At least once a week, in the country, in the city or, when I traveled to another country, people would ask me where I was from. I got fed up at one point but I’m OK with it now. As far as preferring the city or the country, I think both have their positive sides. What I miss about the country is that when you go somewhere you’ll know everybody there and I miss the silence and peacefulness and connection of nature. But in the city I like the diversity and the opportunities.

“I wouldn’t have gone to a large public school, but the MIND alternative thing suited me. MIND seemed to be geared towards people who were more self-motivated. MIND felt right. I didn’t want to be boxed in with learning and overwhelmed with the size of the school. It suited me. I got 80s and 90s. I was valedictorian for my graduating class. I got a Lieutenant-Governor’s award for community involvement and academic achievement. I never thought about going to college or university, so it wasn’t a definite thing. I try not to plan too much about the future. I like being flexible.”

(Kyra. Personal Interview,. 26 August 2004.)

In the third interview, Kyra focused on world issues. “The world interests me especially the world outside of North America. In the country you see how people live with the basics. In the city there’s so much excess, there’s a real consumer mentality, so much we don’t need. I’ve always been around people

with problems telling me all their stuff so I seem to attract people like that. I haven't been personally exposed to a lot violence other than my father and brother.”(Kyra. Personal Interview. 9 September 2004.)

Kyra Photo Interview

“I came to understand LOVE as a community. Especially when you walk in and people give you a hug. I wasn't expecting that. I didn't find it strange, it's something that you note. At MIND we had that.

“I liked photojournalism mainly because of the photo part. I write and take photos, so I would consider myself a photojournalist. I never did black and white before the Photojournalism Project. I took snapshots. I find people very interesting. Most of the people I want to take are children and if I had my choice I would always take pictures of children but you need permission from a guardian. I love the darkroom, its so much fun. I'm always excited to come in and develop my film. I love the printing process. The chemicals I don't mind, but I don't like loading the film. Whenever I'm walking, I'm scouting. A lot of the things I take are stationary. I'll pick a location. I always have my camera with me.”(Kyra. Personal Interview, 2 September, 2004.)

Chapter 5: Analysis

5.0 Introduction

In constructing the analysis section of this study, I will begin by using the conceptual framework recognized by Noam, Winner, Rhein, & Molad. The four settings they identified are the places where adolescents face multiple risks. These at-risk settings are the family, community, peer world and school. In the second part of this analysis, I will use these settings again to investigate the data from the photo-interviews displayed in the ten photo tables. I will also discuss media violence by looking at the issues surrounding the media and its role in the culture of youth violence. I will continue the analysis by focusing on the comments from the interviews conducted and include some of the photographic images selected by the study subjects. The four settings open up a means for drawing out the major insights emerging in the study. It is through this lens that I will begin this analysis of the ten young people whose personal lives have been touched by violence.

5.1 Family

Abuse, neglect, parental discord and divorce are mentioned consistently by the study participants. Only three of the ten participants grew up with both of their biological parents. The remaining seven have essentially grown up in blended families with step-parents and siblings, parents with boyfriend or girlfriend. Three of the seven also spent some time in a group or foster home care setting. Because the majority of the teens came from these blended-family situations, it became increasingly obvious how fragile and risk-laden some of these living situations were for the them. As Dryfoos points out, the fragile family life of so many adolescents often leads to feelings of alienation as well as a lack of adult support and lack of attachment to adults.

As a criteria for joining the Photojournalism Project, each teen had to have

had some personal experience with violence. When reading the portraits, one of the first characteristics that begins to emerge is the fragility of family life as well as the exposure to multiple acts of violence within it. Most surprisingly for me, as their teacher, was how little I actually knew about the violence that was occurring in their lives at the time and how it was affecting them during their participation in the Photojournalism Project. It makes me realize that many of the LOVE teens, and many adolescents in general, deserve medals just for the bravery and resilience they show for getting out of bed to face the trials and tribulations of another day. Consider Kristy's declaration: "I feel I've had a lifetime of pain and I've gotten over it...I've come from somewhere that is lower than dirt and risen above everything."

The pain that Kristy expressed is a familiar story for many young people in our communities and serves to remind us, as May said, that "as long as any of us are in pain or silenced, we are collectively responsible."(138)

The fragility of family life is evident throughout the interviews conducted and we often get a sense of what Currie described as the 'sink or swim family' in which there is a relinquishing of family responsibility by adults and "the growing child is simply set adrift."(80) Jesse brings out this type of situation when he says:

After the divorce, my Dad was still irresponsible. He would be hung over and forget to pick up my sister and I at the subway station for visits. The same goes for my mother because she was dropping us off alone. So growing up, I faced lots of abandonment issues. We were always being dropped off at lots of different people's places which, when you're a kid, is not that great. I learned to stick with myself.

Feelings of frustration and hopelessness are conveyed by many of study participants because of the family breakdowns caused by separation and divorce.

Concrete incidents of family violence are recalled by many of the study participants. They become victims in a series of emotional, verbal and, often, physical abuses that are directed at them. Jesse's reflections on his father's violence are a good indication of this:

My Dad left before I can remember. There was lots of violence towards my mother from my father. He was an alcoholic at the time. His family background was that of a very poor European immigrant with an angry father who beat all the kids. He came from a very violent home.

Kyra's recollections also support this. She said of her brother, "He started hitting me. He got extremely violent towards me both physically and verbally and that continued for at least a year. Even in the city that continued."

With the breakdown of the family, teens are pushed into more negative situations that place them at even greater risk within the family. There is also the loss of contact with one or both parents and with this, feelings of neglect and abandonment grow. As Kyra noted:

My parents separated when I was around eight-years-old. Some of the brothers sided with my Mom, some with my Dad. It was confusing, but we stayed with my Mom."... After they separated it was difficult for me. There was actually supposed to be joint custody, but he went away... Within a year after divorcing my Mom, my Dad announced to all that he was getting married. I was upset that he never told us until the last minute but I wrote a letter to him and he responded to that by saying not to communicate with him, that I was like my mother.

Joni noted in her situation:

I didn't really understand the separation and divorce process. Obviously I can't remember some things. There was a lot of court stuff going on, they would fight all the time... I wanted to go to high school in the city so there was a power struggle between my parents as my mother tried to convince me to continue my studies in the country. At fourteen though I went to the city to live with my father.

Central to the everyday lives of the study participants was the presence of alcohol and drugs and the negative consequences that come about as a result of them being added into an already unstable situation. Said Kristy:

Drugs were easy to get. I was addicted to crack at age 10. My stepfather he actually beat me. One time, he was whipping me but I was high and just laughed. My mother didn't stop the abuse. When we were young we thought she didn't know but once we were older we knew she would hear us getting the beatings and she wouldn't do anything. My sisters and I we were all doing drugs, all screwed up, we tried to get her attention but she didn't bother. She never came to intervene. We were all scared of him, my step-dad.

Monica told a similar tale:

My mother had a new drug dealing boyfriend who it turns out wasn't very nice and during this time my two sisters were born, two sisters who didn't look like me. My life was surrounded by drugs and violence as my mother became more deeply involved in an abusive relationship. I remember lots of moving around and once staying in a shelter. I began to develop anger towards men. I never knew my father. To me he was dead.

We also see domestic violence of another nature in the family life of two of the girls who both become victims of their mothers' boyfriend's and step-father's sexually abusive behavior. In Monica's case, the behavior was specifically targeted at her and her sister by the boyfriend who left his own biological daughters, Monica's step-sisters, alone. As Garbarino suggested:

at particular risk is a child who is exposed to a man who is sexually involved with the child's mother but is not biologically related to the child or legally or socially committed to serve as a surrogate father. This is the "mother's boyfriend" who appears so disproportionately in reports of child abuse of all kinds (48).

In Monica's story, we begin to understand her silence about her abuse. Afraid of breaking up the family, she silenced herself. She was deeply connected to her younger step-sisters and cared about them a lot. I found that with Monica there was already instilled a sense of caring. Her fears and concerns about social services acknowledges what Fine noted about the rise the number of minors taken from their families because of child abuse. Monica's compassion for her family, even in the face of violence, guides her actions so that she remains silent about the violence that surrounds her.

In Kyra's portrait, the notion of caring about others is also reflected. To protect her family she minimizes the violence. In summing up she says:

When I was younger I was very eager to please so I would do anything to make people happy. I made friends very easily but hadn't learned to respect my own boundaries. I took care of everyone but myself.

As the incidents of abuse, violence, and bad behavior start to pile up, there is some recognition by the teens that they are victims in abusive situations. They recognize that by remaining silent about their situations they are caught in a very tough situation as they grapple with whether or not to speak out. Britzman and Cohen-Evron called this personal struggle "difficult knowledge", that is, information that is resisted because it causes one to face the moral conflict in their reality(319). Examples of this occur in Monica's and Charles's portraits when they keep quiet about the abuse at home:

We suffered in silence to keep the family together. To go to LOVE and then return home was really hard. I never told my father...I had a big secret I was carrying and I worried about LOVE finding out and calling social services. I didn't want to go under foster care or go live in a group home and be separated from my sisters. So, I suffered. On school outreaches talking to kids I felt like a hypocrite because I was telling them that if they were in an abusive situation or knew of somebody else in one

they should speak out. (Monica)

After the beating I listened to the music of the band Public Enemy. The next day I went to school with lots of bruises. Usually I never thought to say that my mother beat the shit out of me. That day I said my mother beat me up and that changed everything. Social workers were called in and my friends and teachers were all more sensitive and feeling bad for me. My mother asked me why didn't I just say that I had been hit by a hockey puck. (Charles)

Gary had a life-long quest to meet his father, only to learn at fourteen that his father was never really that far away. Tragically, his reconnection with his father is a case of too little, too late. He said:

I always wondered why I didn't have the perfect family. I look on TV and see that, but not me, I always wondered where he was. My grandmother searched for him and found him. I went to visit him when he was in the hospital and there were five other kids in the room. I didn't know who they were. They were Dad's other kids. He survived and he introduced them all to me so that when they came to the hospital, I'm sitting there and they're talking about Dad. "He did this for my birthday and bought me this at Christmas." They were getting gifts and postcards. I felt left out. It got to my head so that I can't care much about him. At this point I didn't want to go over that again. I already had just lost someone, my girlfriend.

The themes of stigma and shame also run throughout the interviews. Kools (1997) indicates the ramifications of such stigma and shame. Monica and Charles shed light on this matter during the interviews:

We were poor. My single mom was on social assistance trying to make ends meet. We were so poor that I was even jealous of the other kids lunches. I always had bologna and mustard sandwiches. After the separation my father went to live in the United States. After we came to Montreal my father lost contact with us.(Monica)

From that point on my life really changed as I became a part of the social

service system and put under foster care. You have to realize that I lived in a small town trailer park where you are considered to be an outcast by many people. It's a stigma and even some of your friends' parents are nervous about you. (Charles)

The frequency and the multiple experiences of violence is immediately evident in Monica's portrait. The break-up of the family and subsequent move to Montreal placed her in a predominantly French-speaking neighborhood where she was victimized constantly by the racially-motivated taunting from the kids in her neighborhood. Monica continued being a victim of abuse by her mother's boyfriend and also became a perpetrator of ongoing fights with the French kids in her neighborhood. Sadly, Monica became a victim again in college. She said, "I was dating someone who eventually viciously assaulted me in the subway station." The cycle of violence is obvious here.

Kristy's vivid description of her childhood and school life provides another example of the ongoing cycle of violence in the daily lives of young people. She said, "I was picked on a lot for being a 'half-breed'. I was always scared. I don't remember not being scared!" Contrasting with Kristy's description of her elementary school days, by high school she said, "I became a bully. I always wanted to fight. The principal hated me. I started fights. Don't mess with me...Everybody was afraid of me. I would fight anybody, even guys."

One of the positive elements that helps to mitigate the long-term effects of a fragile family situation is the presence of at least one supportive family member who can assist a teen through difficult times. Such a person surfaces every now and then in the portraits. For Monica, her father was a very positive presence. She said, "He showed a lot more interest in me than my mother and helped me to get better grades." Kristy had her grandmother "who was trying to teach me

about Native culture but I was mixed up. I did not know whether I was Native or French.”

5.2 Community

For many of the study participants, life during their teen years was a life on the move, due to changing family situations. Repeatedly, they found themselves living in different neighborhoods or communities and having to deal with new and often hostile environments. In Montreal, there is always the chance of living in neighborhoods that are predominantly French, which, if you don't speak the language, adds to the tension that already exists. Monica vividly recalled life after the move from English-speaking Nova Scotia to a French-speaking neighborhood in Montreal.

It was hard to get along in the neighborhood when none of us spoke any French”...Monica continued, “I went to an inner city English-speaking elementary school. Most of the kids were Greek and Portuguese and I was one of the few Black kids there. I felt underlying racism from both the teachers and the students. I didn't even get along with the other Black kids because I was dark-skinned and they were light. I was constantly taunted by the kids in my neighborhood as well as at school. It wasn't unusual to hear the 'n-word' or 'chocolat' shouted at me.

Similar situations were reported by Jesse and Kristy:

Then we moved more out in the country. In that neighborhood it was hard to make friends because it was a French neighborhood. I really only had two or three friends. (Jesse)

I lived with my step-sisters which was both awkward and difficult. From the age of two to eleven my life in Kanawake was hell! It was ghetto! We lived in the ghetto on dirt roads. I was picked on a lot for being a half-breed, my dad is White and my mother Native American. (Kristy)

Miguel's experience highlights some of the problems that can arise in recent-

immigrant families. Sometimes within these close-knit communities there are breakdowns between families caused by strained social or business relations. In Miguel's instance, his father pulled back from his community and had little to do with other people or family from his country.

My dad's sister is also here in Montreal but they don't really get along. My father was an insurance salesman and at one time he lent people lots of money in the community who never paid him back. After that he stayed away from them. He was never able to get close to those people again.

Andrew describes his neighborhood as relatively safe, but what is interesting in his recollection is that he not only remembers his father's racist comments but also the incident with the bike. This supports what Pollack, Canada, and Ryan said; that early in their development boys are encouraged to act "like a man" and told "not to cry" and to take care of themselves. This was the message being passed down to Andrew by his father

My neighborhood was a relatively safe one but my father would complain about the "Pakis and Indians moving in." These people, he said, were destroying the neighborhood. My most memorable incident of this time of life was when my bike was stolen and I went to the kid who had taken it. He denied taking it and I remember he hit me when I confronted him about it. I never told my father about this because he believed that I had to learn to take care of things myself as well as defend myself.

For Charles, the long-term effects from the stigma of growing up in a trailer park are easily seen as he begins our interview by referring to his shame. As his story continues, this stigma is compounded with another one as he becomes known as the "foster kid" He said, "From that point on my life really changed... You have to realize that I lived in a small town trailer park where you are considered to be an outcast by many people. It's a stigma and even some of your friends' parents are nervous about you." Charles' portrait typifies what

Kools describes as stigma, or the mark of social shame.

5.3 Peer World

When the participants talked about their adolescent years, they focused on the powerful and influential circle of friends who formed their peer world. For the most part, peers come from the community in which they live or the school they attend. As Biehler & Snowman noted about the social characteristic of adolescence, “the peer group becomes the general source of rules of behavior. Developing a code of behavior is a move toward adult independence and to be encouraged” (124). The powerful presence and influence of the peer world makes it easier to understand the roller-coaster ride of psycho-social behavior that occurred among the study participants during their adolescence; they begin to search for their personal identity and at the same time negotiated the highs and lows of fitting in, friendships, and relationships.

I was in for more of a culture shock since this school had more Black English-speaking students something new for me. I would still be asked, “Where are you from?” For maybe the first time I didn’t feel like a lone minority but I still didn’t really fit in since I was from Nova Scotia, spoke “White” and not of Caribbean descent. I didn’t even know what reggae was and I didn’t wear the same type of clothes. (Monica)

I then went to a downtown high school. It was rumors. Rumors about you, about someone else, now school was a popularity trip. I was lucky I knew some people. I became a bully. I always wanted to fight. The principal hated me. I started fights. Don’t mess with me. I was in grade seven. Everybody was afraid of me. I would fight anybody, even guys. I would go to school dances and get drunk. I was already used to doing it. I didn’t have any friends in high school because I wanted to fight so I never had any long-term friendships.(Kristy)

The racial thing became more difficult as I got older and understood more. I remember a friend and someone said to her “what are you doing

hanging out with that nigger?” That really hurt. Some other preppy boys would give the Indian holler whoop. My friend never really defended that issue and just laughed it off. (Kyra)

During my first year at Dawson (College) I was dating someone who eventually viciously assaulted me in the subway station. As a result, I was put on crutches for one month. I remember the sick feeling I had walking into school next day knowing that everybody knew what had happened to me (Monica)

Whether the peer group consists of friends from school or friends from the community, it is quite clear that when it comes to delinquent behavior, as Harris noted, it is done not solo, but with a group of friends. Many of the male participants freely admitted that their lives were “out of control” and related that their days were filled with criminal activity of one sort or another. As Gurian recognized, “boys are hungry for the group.”

I was only twelve and I was in with the worst kids. The school was a dumping ground for all the fuckups and druggies. All the big city kids doing stuff which was new for me. Showing up at school with stolen cars and robbing parked beer trucks. We were a different group. I remember I took some beatings. I remember myself and another guy being drunk and beating a kid up. I had steel toes boots on. I would sometimes snap when I got a bit wasted. A few times when I'm not really thinking and the alcohol takes over it can be like tapping into my evil side. I got beat up a few times. I was always able to get up. It was more like “Ok, you beat the crap out of me “can I go home now?(Jesse)

But eventually I was thirteen and I hitched hiked around from one town to another in the area. I had really become a part of social services system. I was notorious in all three towns in the area. Everybody was talking about me “ the kid from the trailer park”. I became like an urban legend in three small towns. “ Oh, your that kid,” they would say. People wanted to meet me and I partied all the time. We did do some criminal activity to support ourselves. . .I was out of control, stealing cars, guns and smoking weed. I couldn't keep stealing cars and it all came crashing down when we got caught. One of the guys went to jail. I left Alberta and

went to live with my grandmother in Montreal and became Charles Wagge. (Charles)

Another common element and characteristic prevalent amongst the males was the code of honor that seemed to be instilled and displayed. As Andrew said, the guys were essentially “honorable thugs”. Even in the schoolyard, there was the protection of the weaker kids in a sort of King Arthur mythological way Andrew claimed.

What about a youth who always has a hard time finding a comfortably fitting peer group to spend time with? Michael, for example, showed at an early age socialization problems with his peers. He blames this on the fact that he spent most his pre-school days under the care of his grandparents with little contact with other children.

While the boys in the study were quite open about their bad behaviour, comments from Kristy offered a look into the world of girls and their delinquent behaviour which has been increasing in recent year, as Gabarino noted. Kristy described her bad behaviour:

I had four girlfriends and they were trouble and I was trouble. Mix trouble with trouble you get evil. We did a lot of bad things. I was maybe in grade five and had no curfew. We broke into houses and stole a lot of money and drugs from those. We just did a lot of stupid stuff, even stole a car.

5.4 School

Many children and youth are overwhelmed by what they witness in their families and communities (e.g., from violence to death, from divorce to abandonment). Many of these children cannot leave the effects of these experiences outside the school gates. They struggle during their school days with concentration problems, depression, anxiety and even suicidality. Weapons and drugs do not remain outside the school (Noam,

Winner, Rhein, & Molad, 33).

In looking at the success of the study participants' high school experience, only four of the ten actually completed and obtained their high school diploma. Monica, Miguel, Joni and Kyra managed to finish high school and these four have gone on to successfully complete post-secondary studies. Jesse and Charles have continued post-secondary studies at the university level as mature students. Andrew, Kristy, Michael, and Gary are still considering an eventual return to school at one level or another. Of the four teens who went on to complete high school, three were girls. Miguel was the lone male.

If there is one place where the negative consequences from at-risk behavior are highlighted, it is in the classroom. Each of the 10 portraits typify different school situations. There is a feeling of tension among some of the teens with regards to their school experience, especially among the boys who generally struggle to keep up with girls at all levels of education.

I was always scared. I don't remember not being scared! At elementary school I was picked on all the time for being Native. I was bused into one of the schools I attended. No other kids in my area got on the bus...In elementary school I got A's. I liked school when I was in class because at least my stepfather wasn't there so I wasn't getting hurt. The kids on the other hand were always mean to me outside of class. One time they built a snow mountain and buried me in there. I was terrified at recess, lunch hours and getting on the bus after school. (Kristy)

In elementary school though when my mother came to pick me up there wasn't a single day when a kid or a principal didn't tell her that "your son did this or your son did that." My father didn't care much and nor did I. My mother she was the one who picked me up and she was the one who took all the shit! (Michael)

My elementary school was safe and everybody got along. In high school that's when you really get a different ball game. You have to defend

yourself. If you are not in the group you try to get through the day not tipping on anyone, not stomping on feet, and you sit and eat your lunch quietly. I was pretty good in school. It wasn't a problem at all, just read my books, studying, just doing what I had to do. (Gary)

Seven of the study participants were attending smaller alternative schools when they joined the Photojournalism Project. I had discovered a network of alternative schools within Montreal's public school system when I was doing research on at-risk youth and high school drop-outs for my Master's degree studies. I found that these schools were a sanctuary and safety net for many adolescents who for various reasons were struggling to keep up their studies or to simply stay in school. Many of these schools had a very small student body, averaging 20 –60 students. This allowed for a very good teacher-student ratio and enabled teachers to provide the extra attention and guidance required for their students to succeed. The study participants consistently praised and lauded these schools and teachers for the help given them during their attendance there.

The high school had twenty five hundred students. My hometown had 2500 people in the whole town. The school was just too big for me to be comfortable so I found a small alternative school, Mile End, where I would get the support, the attention and guidance needed to finish high school. (Charles)

For high school I eventually went to Venture, a small alternative school. It was different there. The Head Teacher and Principal already knew what I had done and they said to me "Just do your work and go home. Don't come to school drunk or stoned"... I liked the closeness of the school and, I didn't have to worry about popularity. I didn't have to worry about lots of kids. My French teacher was very understanding and realized I didn't come from a French neighborhood so I stayed after class and she taught me more and I was able to pass. (Kristy)

I wouldn't have gone to a large public school but the MIND alternative thing suited me. MIND seemed to be geared towards people who were

more self-motivated. MIND felt right. I didn't want to be boxed in with learning and overwhelmed with the size of the school. (Kyra)

Kyra was an exceptionally gifted student who obtained most of her education through the home schooling network. She purposely sought out an alternative school and chose MIND because it was geared towards people who were self-motivated. Her story connects to what Tapscott alluded to, claiming that the large increase in home schooled students is a warning that there is an urgent need within education and for teachers to change and transform their classrooms. Inevitably, he claims, "society will find other ways to deliver learning and bypass them" (138).

Kristy and Monica were constantly surrounded by violence. Both girls allowed their own emotional turmoil to spill over into the classroom and they verbally and physically confronted their teachers. These incidents support the idea that many adolescents in classrooms today face an overwhelming and negative amount of life experiences on a daily basis and quite often their needs are not necessarily evident to those around them.

My history teacher was a jackass. I had been called savage my whole life and it was difficult to hear this word in class. He would insist on calling Native people savages. (Kristy)

My high school career started off good. There were some "nice" teachers but there were also the nasty ones who predicted that I would end up like the rest of my family with little education and living on social assistance. Most of my family are drug addicts, young and pregnant, and/or living on welfare"... then things got out of control for me one day at school and I actually pushed a teacher. That's when it was recommended that I join LOVE. Once I joined I began to open up and lie about the "perfect life" I didn't have. (Monica)

What I noted about the four study participants who did graduate from high

school was their gender. The quartet was made up of three girls and only one boy. There has been an immense shift over the past few decades in the makeup of the student population with an increase in female participation and academic success at all levels of the education system. Recently, there has been much media attention and focus on this matter. Tyre and Kever have written articles that raise the question of why boys do not seem to be succeeding in school anymore. The struggles in school begin early for boys where, as Tyre pointed out, “coming of age in a culture that discourages bookishness, boys are more likely to fall victim to drugs and violence” (49).

Several of the male study participants referred to their frightful school experience. Charles was vehement about hating school. For Andrew and Jesse, school was just not that important in their lives. Michael found that he never fit in at school and that he was always in trouble. This fuelled his anger towards his classmates and he would strike out and exact revenge against any peer who would slight him in any way. He would even steal from them.

Miguel’s portrait takes on more meaning and significance in this study in that his experience with school is typical of adolescent males when he says, “school was just boring.” This is something I’ve heard so often from so many teens, both male and female. This boredom factor for Miguel helped lead him into heavy pot-smoking and non-attendance in school. Luckily, as he admits, he was able to get on track, but for many this is not the case.

5.5 Media and Youth Violence

The media’s reporting and portrayal of violence influenced the teenaged boy who in copy-cat fashion murdered Daniel Rudberg. By exploring and documenting violence as photojournalists, the participants essentially became part

of the media they so adore. None of the study participants actually blamed the media specifically for causing youth violence. Some of the study participants were able to articulate their thoughts on the effects of media violence on young people. I found that they wrestled, like the rest of society, with the question of whether or not there is a connection between the media and violence, in particular youth violence. The study participants spoke about the technology of video games and their explicitly graphic violence.

Video games are totally more violent now and music is more expressive. I play video games and I think that the developers have made them more violent from when I first started playing them ten years ago. Is there a link to violence? I would say that the games are not supervised properly. Little kids ten or twelve year olds get their hands on them and the parents don't supervise them. The parents don't read the information nor do they really seem to care. The kids get lost in them. (Andrew)

Joni echoed similar thoughts, saying that the media will always sell violence to young people. She adds that children are growing up too fast, a matter that Postman addressed in his book *The Disappearance of Childhood*, in which he claimed that childhood as we once knew it is being denied children today because they are exposed to too much violence at too young an age. Monica also acknowledged that gangster rap music along with the supporting videos contribute to and perpetuate violence in the community, and provides her old neighborhood as an example of where people are still into drugs and gangs. However, Monica realized, like Canada, that rap music alone is not the main media culprit selling violence.

Charles, a hip-hop musician, cites his life-long love of hip-hop music as his main choice of listening music. He even listened to rap music after one of his physical confrontations with his mother. He is an example of how this genre of

music has become so mainstream and readily accepted and listened to by teens from all kinds of socio-economic backgrounds, reaffirming what Ostroff puts forward about the dangers of marketing of gangsta rap to already fragile teenage listeners. Charles also didn't feel that optimistic about the future for young people with technology getting better and computer games, music and television destroying their minds. For him its all about money and even people in Afghanistan listen to Eminem. He said, "One big Wal-Mart, that's what the world is."

In his portrait Jesse readily admitted that the heavy-metal band Metallica has had a major influence on him for most of his life. He knew not only the band's music but also their personal life stories. His reverential way of talking about them underlined for me the powerful presence that people in the entertainment industry can have on young people.

5.6 Photojournalism Project

The relative ease with which the teen participants from the Photojournalism Project were able to engage in photojournalism captured many of the "reconstructivist stream of influence" that Efland and Siegesmund referred to, where "art education is explicitly placed in the service of social transformation." The LOVE teens were recruited into the project as photojournalists and given a real-life opportunity to pursue photography and writing, and eagerly embraced the it:

I came to understand LOVE as a community.. Especially when you walk in and people give you a hug. I wasn't expecting that. I didn't find it strange, it's something that you note. At MIND we had that. (Kyra)

I was definitely a photojournalist. I thought of myself as more documentary style rather than a photographer. I was really proud, the book, the newspaper and the media. It made me think about the

possibilities for the future. Let's do something about the violence! I found that discussing violence allows for a common experience with the others because it affects us all. (Charles)

The camera each teen received when they came into the Photojournalism Project served two purposes. First, as Kristy pointed out, this was a genuine gesture and show of trust by LOVE to let each youth have a camera to take home and use while participating in the project. "That's what amazed me. You gave us cameras, us, drug dependant teens." As Wallach noted, this signaled to the teens that the adults who were involved in the project were ready to form a meaningful relationships with them. Second, by having the use of a camera full-time they were encouraged in their role as photojournalists to explore and document the issues surrounding youth violence and then produce newspapers, books and exhibits of their work. This final result is, suggested Krensky, "in essence placing the artistic product in the community is political and/or social participation. The combination of social responsibility education and arts education provides an effective educational approach to promote social responsibility, art education, and democratic participation"(4).

For all of the study participants, the opportunity to become "reporters" for the Photojournalism Project proved to be an exciting and rewarding experience. For the most part, all of the participants expressed how they considered themselves to be photojournalists. Only Gary didn't become involved in the photography activities. The others,, however jumped at the chance to go out into the community and take pictures based around a variety of themes related to youth violence.

When Jesse joined the Photojournalism Project, he said to me that there seemed to be lots of community art projects for pre-teens and younger kids and

even for adults, but when it came to projects for teenagers there weren't many out there, especially community-based arts projects like the Photojournalism Project. Jesse's observation also echoes what Kretzmann and McKnight said about society's perception of youth that "the unique energy and creativity of youth is often denied to the community because the young people of the neighborhood are all too often viewed in terms of their lack of maturity and practical life experience" (29). I found that most of the participants had a renewed interest in art-making and that they appreciated the opportunity to find a means of self-expression through their photojournalism work. The rejuvenation of their artistic skills came at a time when typically, as Pariser suggested, "early adolescence is the graveyard of artistic activity" (124).

In becoming photojournalists, the study participants were given some of the tools necessary to begin to transform themselves. In practical terms the photography and writing skills acquired in the Photojournalism Project were numerous. The teens learned to work with black and white film, from shooting to developing film and making prints. This step-by-step, start to finish photo experience was for many their first taste of creative and artistic success. Monica and Kristy both refer to this in the photo interviews. Their interaction with other LOVE youth, staff and volunteers, as well as the other photo students from Dawson College in the darkrooms and labs also provided a glimpse into what they could possibly do in the future. Charles spoke about this in his interview, especially with regards to the work being put in newspapers, books and exhibits. Joni became so inspired by her photographic experience that she actually enrolled and graduated with honors from the Professional Photography Program at Dawson College. Michael claimed that he was solely in the Photojournalism Project because he wanted to be a photojournalist.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

“The great truth about adolescence is that one must be lucky to survive it.”(Blatchford 15)

6.0 Introduction

The Photojournalism Project was introduced in the decade when it seemed to me that incidents of youth violence were increasing throughout the world. Locally, in 1995, three teen boys on a wild, drug induced rampage killed the Reverend Frank Toope and his wife in a West Island suburb of Montreal. In 1997 in Victoria, British Columbia, fourteen year-old Reena Virk was swarmed and beaten to death by a frenzied mob of her peers, both male and female. In England that same year, two 12-year old boys quietly whisked 10-year old Jamie Bulger away from a store and brutally murdered him. Of course, the infamous 1999 school shootings at Columbine High School shocked the world. The teens involved in this incident were from an affluent Colorado suburb and the revengeful wounding and slaying of so many of their own classmates indicated how alienated and disengaged from reality teenagers could become. As well, in the Columbine aftermath, evidence again pointed to the possible influence that the media could play in motivating and providing justification for teenagers to commit acts of violence as a solution to their problems. Most recently, here in Montreal at Dawson College, where the Photojournalism Project was started, there was a powerful and tragic reminder of how violence affects us all when a heavily armed gunman entered the college last September 13, 2006 and opened fire on students, killing one and injuring 20. During those tragic moments, I remained hidden with three other people in the Dawson photo equipment room where I had been working when everything started. We waited for three long hours and watched events unfold through the

Internet connection available in the room. Life can be filled with many ironies and the irony for me, as a co-founder of the Photojournalism Project, was to have violence strike less than 50 yards away, in the place where I have tried so hard over the years to educate young people to turn away from violence as a solution to problems. In the spring of 2007, at Virginia Tech University, we were reminded once more in a most brutal and gruesome fashion about how violence can suddenly erupt and affect us all.

If anything, these incidents, and many more like them, demonstrate a need to reach out into our own communities and try to find help for the frustrated and alienated young people who live there. In this way, art education, art educators, and community-based art projects like the Photojournalism Project can play a significant role in helping young people to better cope with the pressure in their lives that sometimes leads to violence.

6.1 The Photojournalism Project Experience

Throughout this study I have returned to the various settings in which adolescents most frequently experience the negative events that put them at risk in their everyday lives. The at-risk settings of family, community, peer world, and school all play an instrumental role in the development of adolescent lives. In my role as Photojournalism Project Co-Founder, I was often asked, “Why does the Photojournalism Project work?” The most obvious and natural answer for me would be to relate how for me, when I was a teen, the arts were a key factor in continuing my education. Another immediate response to the question of why the Photojournalism Project works is to focus on the relationship and community-building that happened in the project. But also, I think that the continued success of the Photojournalism Project can also be accounted for in terms of educational teaching and learning theory. In an era where educators always seem to be trying to find new solutions to old problems, many older tried and true educational ideas seem to be

either overlooked or forgotten. As a prime example and very much relating to the success of the Photojournalism Project, Abraham H. Maslow's views on humanistic education and more specifically, his interest in motivation, were instrumental in the development and long term success of the Photojournalism Project. How to keep the teens motivated to stay involved with the work we asked them to learn and practice became a central theme once we had invited them to participate. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs outlines his theory of motivation and can be summarized in this way:

When individuals have satisfied their lower, or deficiency, needs (physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem), they will feel motivated to satisfy higher growth (or being) needs (self-actualization, knowing and understanding, aesthetic)- not because of a deficit but because of a desire to gratify higher needs (475).

As I continue with my analysis I will demonstrate how in several ways the Photojournalism Project was able to engage the teen participants by simply satisfying some of their lower needs, thus motivating them to satisfy their higher growth needs as described by Maslow. This self-actualization process emerges out of a community-based project that helps reduce some of negative effects resulting out of the at-risk settings that the teen participants came from.

6.2 Photojournalism Project as Family, Community, and Peer World

While community-based art projects like the Photojournalism Project might not fully replace the various at-risk situations that teens' might find themselves in, they do have the potential to provide some of the elements that are missing from their lives. Because of the enormous complexities involved in dealing with serious social issues such as violence and its effects on young people, we can agree that just an ethic of caring and responsibility alone cannot tackle the variety of issues surrounding youth violence. Society as a whole must be able to reach

out, identify, and connect a variety of ideas together to solve social problems.

By recognizing how the roles of family, community, peer world and school are intertwined in the lives of adolescents, the LOVE Photojournalism Project has been able to offer these settings for teen participants. Can an after-school project replace family, community or peer world during an adolescence development? I would say no, but based on the portraits I have constructed, there is strong evidence that points towards a positive impact and potential for long-term benefits that can be gained by teens through their participation in a project that provides an alternative environment and reconstructs a positive family, community and peer world relationships that may be missing in their lives.

I cannot think of a more convincing or larger testimony to the important role that a community-based project can play in a young person's life than when, as in my case, you are told, "You have been like a father to me." Many of the study participants came from families where a break in the family structure had occurred and often contact was lost with one, or both parents. In the girls' portraits, the already tenuous at-risk situations that they existed in were compounded by their mothers' relationships that placed them in deeper crisis. Under those circumstances, the Photojournalism Project provided an opportunity for the teens to come and discuss the pressures in their lives and to express these feelings and thoughts about their situation through photojournalism.

Brenda Zosky Proulx and I would often remark how we felt like the parents of the project participants and this was not far from the truth as our roles did evolve into this. The parental roles were first established with the pre-selection interviews that Brenda and I conducted with each potential participant and continued once they came into the Photojournalism Project.

Early on in our work with LOVE., Brenda and I presented at one of the first

Photojournalism Projects exhibitions at Wellesley College when it was pointed out by one Fine Art faculty member that perhaps our unique pairing, a Black male and a White, Jewish female, provided a lesson in diversity for many of the participants. It was felt that this factor, along with our personalities, contributed immensely to the success of the program. Of course, the Photojournalism Project has since gone on to be successful with other people leading the way, proving how essential it is to having positive adult role models in the group mix.

Just as trust amongst family members is a key element of our psycho-social development, so too did trust become a key element to the eventual success of each teen's personal experience in the Photojournalism Project. Initially, many of the participants were surprised at the high level of trust shown by LOVE. by lending the cameras. The cameras served as an ice-breaker and as a building block to a higher level of trust that was best demonstrated by the fact that some of the teens actually came to the Photojournalism Project after having experienced, as one teen said, "dark days". The so-called "dark days" could have been anything from a fight with a family member, drugs or alcohol abuse, or trouble at school. In the end I took this as a compliment and had satisfaction and comfort in knowing that their level of trust was such that they would still come to participate after school.

In accepting the notion of community as being as much about accepting the differences in people as well as recognizing similarities, the Photojournalism Project reflects this philosophy because the study participants were hand-picked and came from a variety of backgrounds and from different schools. This was done in order to create a group of teens that reflected and represented the youth in the community and to create our own community within this experience. As well, one of the ways to reduce violence was to bring teens together from

different peer groups in order to break down stereotypes that young people have about each other.

The community and relationship building approach was constantly reinforced with the addition of staff, volunteers, and guest lecturers who played an integral role in the twice-weekly Photojournalism Project sessions. I found that the youth genuinely enjoyed and appreciated the role that these community members played in the collaborative learning experience that was taking place.

Beginning with the production of the exhibits in the community, then followed by the publishing of their work in the community newspaper *One Love*, the study participants gradually began to realize that they had something positive to offer back to their community. In this way the Photojournalism Project allowed for the youths to reconnect to their community on several levels. Exhibits and newspapers, the school outreaches, discussions with other young people about violence, presentations at community conferences and business meetings, all helped to make the participants feel less alienated and frustrated since they were being given the opportunity to give back and make a positive contribution to the community. Through their participation in the Photojournalism Project they became more empowered as they were given a voice and an outlet to express their thoughts and feelings. Being given the opportunity to participate in an after-school project like the Photojournalism Project also provides the opportunity to interact within a new peer world, allowing a young person to break away from the tremendous pressure of peer groups in which codes of behavior are formed and maintained within the general confines of the group, often leading to negative experiences and feelings. Ideas, attitudes and expectations were all gradually altered amid the personal perspective transformations that began to take place for the teen participants. For

some, it became harder to hide or deny the violence that may have happened in their personal lives. This became more significant once the youths started to go out to speak to other teens in the schools. Going out to speak to peers about the benefits of a violence-free lifestyle or the need to speak out if you are a victim or witness to violence puts one into the situation of leading by example, thus forcing a change in not only attitudes and beliefs but, more importantly, a change of behavior. Many of the teens struggled with this transitional stage of their adolescence once they became involved with the Photojournalism Project and tried to overcome the personal setbacks they had experienced. For the most part, the teen participants grew to support each other as they became aware of each other's personal situations and the realization that they were not alone in their struggle with the violence that has happened to them. Within this new peer world group some of the vital elements of family and community could be found and developed which facilitated the gradual transformation of the teens' personal behaviour.

6.3 Photojournalism Project as School

The school experience weighs heavy on the lives of adolescents. In this study, it proved to be of vital importance that the majority of the study participants were fortunate enough to have had access to a network of alternative schools once they became labeled "at-risk" students.

As the study shows, there are students from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds attending these schools for a variety of reasons. These alternative schools tend to have smaller student populations that make it possible to create an intimate learning experience and a community between teachers and students making them better suited to meet the needs of the students. The Photojournalism Project participants also seemed to do better in smaller institutions. Being able to

work within a small group of teens (twelve to sixteen) facilitated the implementation of a social and critical pedagogical approach to teaching and learning thus creating a collaborative learning experience between the adolescent participants and the Photojournalism Project staff and volunteers. With the participants' mission to learn photojournalism and create newspapers, books and exhibits that educated the community about youth violence, the study interviews reveal that the teens felt a strong sense of purpose at the height of their participation in the Photojournalism Project.

In trying to create a democratic classroom setting, the teens were asked for their input on a variety of things such as rules for coming to the sessions late, codes of behavior regarding drugs and alcohol, use of swearing or abusive language, and issues of confidentiality within the group. Even to be asked their ideas for activities helped to create the feeling of being valued in the day-to-day operation of the classroom.

6.4 Photojournalism Project as Art

The Photojournalism Project, through its emphasis on photography and writing, was able to capture the imagination of the teens. This is revealed frequently in the interviews. The opportunity to be creative and expressive through photojournalism was, as Pariser (1987) notes, a chance to renew their creative and artistic senses that had become virtually non-existent and somewhat dormant during their teen years. As Kristy recalled,

I never thought that photography was creative. I thought I was just taking a picture to see what it was. It was fun to see what kind of message I was going to put out. I've asked myself how did LOVE change me? I was shadowed all my life I never wanted to be seen before living in the shadows."... "The writing and the photography and being surrounded with other people with similar experience all worked for me. I started writing a

story about what it was like to be in LOVE. It was like day and night my life changes. I think you guys caught us by surprise during the dark days. Nobody wanted to listen to us.

It also appeared to me, judging by some of the interview comments, that perhaps there was a lack of art curriculums that were not only engaging and challenging but also, socially relevant. Again, the eagerness to embrace the creative and artistic needs of teens is exemplified by both Miguel and Jesse:

I was good in art and I did a lot of it, especially in high school. When the opportunity to do LOVE came I was very, very interested and you were supplying everything. It was great! (Miguel)

Everybody needs an outlet. There was no alternative, no artwork. That's why LOVE worked! You could write things out. In school I really wanted to play music, but there was nothing else but the recorder.(Jesse)

Consistently throughout the interviews, the teens state that they were in fact photojournalists documenting teen culture, and more specifically, the culture of violence surrounding teens. Several of the study participants spoke proudly about having a sense of being a photojournalist on an assignment when they went out with cameras in hand to take pictures. In this way, the Photojournalism Project and the notion of being a photojournalist appealed to both the participants' sense of adventure and, more importantly, their sense of purpose.

I hadn't done any art before but I read a lot. I never did photo before but I liked to write. I wrote on my own. The writing definitely attracted me. I also didn't know what photojournalism was. Once I had the camera I took pictures all the time. I like to take pictures. I would go out by myself and shoot. I also took a pen and paper and write also. I remember taking some of the shots. I remember all of them actually. I made sure to experiment with camera angles. (Charles)

As their photography teacher, I guided their enthusiasm with a few basic photographic skills and encouraged them to keep the cameras we had given to them with them all the time. The learning process began with the acquisition of basic photojournalism skills and a renewed belief that they could have fun and success in a creative art-making activity. I shared with them the sense of adventure that would begin once a simple roll of black and white film was placed in the camera. The teens accepted the assignment and would leave and return to the next session with their film to develop. As they gradually mastered film development, they would proceed into the darkroom and become engaged with enlarging their images. The first time watching an image appear on photo paper as it is submerged into the chemicals is a truly unique and memorable experience. Kristy recalled:

I learned how to both load and develop film. I never knew it would be that dark in there to load the film. I was very impatient, I wanted to see it right away. This is so cool! This was something I had never seen or done before. When your loading the film you can't see your hands in front of you and it took a little time to mix the chemicals. When I started watching the prints come to life in the chemicals it was like wow! It was very exciting!

The basic over-all step-by-step learning experience provided the teens with a real sense of accomplishment, and was a positive and satisfying artistic process for them. The exhibition of their work, along with the publishing of newspapers and books, documented the journey of not only the roll of film handed to them but their own personal journey as well. As Monica put it:

I really liked the Photojournalism Project and participated in all parts. I enjoyed making something and seeing it finished, the process. There was big anticipation to developing the film that had been shot. The pictures are evidence of themselves. I had my camera with me all the time and

took pictures. People from school were not surprised to learn that I was working with LOVE because they remember me having my camera on me all the time. Pictures recall memory. When I think tomorrow that I'm 25!

6.5 The Photojournalism Project as, well... the Photojournalism Project.

The essence of the influence and impact of the Photojournalism Project on the teens' lives is captured within the display of the study photo tables containing the comments and images selected during the photo interviews.. The images initially provided an opportunity for the study participants to reflect upon their Photojournalism activities and the work produced during that time of their lives. More importantly though, the images help to shape the 10 portraits presented and when assembled and viewed together, reflect both the interdisciplinary nature of this study and the complexities surrounding the issues of violence and young people. The use of their newly acquired photojournalism skills acted effectively as a catalyst and tool for exploring and documenting both personal violence and violence in the community. This can be seen in the diverse settings in which the photos were taken. All of the photos can be placed within the realm of the at-risk settings, which have been identified and present throughout the study.

When I reflect upon my experience as a community-based art educator, one of the most striking elements for me is the fact that I was able to teach in this setting for over 10 years and that it lead me to conduct this longitudinal study. I must also state that not all of the youths who came into the Photojournalism Project became as engaged as the participants of this study; that in itself could be another research study. However, as a community-based art educator, the Photojournalism Project demonstrates to me how powerful the arts can be in changing young people's lives as well as empowering them to make a valuable

contribution to the community. Of course, change doesn't happen overnight, so the need for long-term funding for these types of projects is essential. This study provides evidence that the benefits of working with at-risk youth over the long term can bring good results. Most of the study participants lives were works-in-progress when they were referred to LOVE but gradually they were able to transform their lives during their participation in the Photojournalism Project. My personal reward over the years has been to see many former Photojournalism Project participants completing their post-secondary studies at Dawson College. Two former participants graduated from Dawson recently, one in Photography, the other in Graphic Design. Another is completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts, major in Photography, at Concordia University in Montreal.

In the future I think that community-based arts projects can play an important role in engaging young people to feel connected to their communities. Many of the schools I visited with the LOVE. youth seemed to be so overwhelmed with the challenges they faced in educating the young people who sit in classrooms today. When I constructed the 10 portraits for this study and look at them as a collective, I think that most teachers can expect to find 10 students in front of them whose personal lives mirror very closely that of the 10 portraits I have presented. This microcosm highlights the need for teachers to identify as early as possible the at-risk youth that are in most classrooms and to further provide the necessary attention and assistance to alleviate the situation. This is a big demand to ask for in the face of dwindling resources in the public school system.. I envision that community organizations could work in partnership with the regular education administration to create arts-based projects and provide them in after-school alternative settings in the community but also integrated into the students' curriculum.

In concluding this dissertation, I'd like to say that as the culture of violence seems to envelope our everyday lives, one can only hope that the young people whose lives are filled daily with so many risks are provided with the coping skills needed to become adults who can make positive contributions to their communities.

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C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.

I understand that my participation in this study is:

CONFIDENTIAL(i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity)

I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE ANBD UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.

I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

WITNESS SIGNATURE _____

Date _____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a reseach participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at 514-848-2424x7481 or by email at Adela.Reid@concordia.ca

Appendix II

Tentative Interview Protocol & Notes

Interview One Protocol

1. Investigator's motives and intentions, i.e. inquiry's purpose
2. Protection through pseudonyms
3. Final say over content(I will show)
4. Payment - nil
5. Logistics - time, place and number of interviews

Lead Question: Why do you think I selected you and what contribution do you think you could make to my study?

Next the role of memory, how far back can you remember?

The journey into the Photojournalism Project.

First delve into issues of daily life such as:

Parents and family

 Neighborhood

School

Friends and Strangers

Work

Love and Romance

Art-making

Other Forces, i.e., violence, sickness, foster care, substance abuse, sexual orientation, physical attributes

Beliefs:

Art

Religion and Politics

Prejudice

Are we a family? - connections to other youth in LOVE

The Future/Next Generation

Questioning

Universal questions

Open ended questions

Probing questions

Interview Two Protocol - Photography/Art-making

Lead in question: Did you know what photjournalism was? What does it mean?

Experience shooting, experience in darkroom, experience teaching(if any)

Put work produced in chronological order and pick out significant images for either personal or photographic reasons

Writing Questions

Interview Three Protocol

Review the work

Select photos and discuss

Interview Four Protocol

Show final data results for discussion, modifications and or approval