LOVE & War

A study of the Leave Out ViolencE organization

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LOVE & War

Table of Contents

LOVE & War

LOVE & War

LOVE & War

LOVE & War

Abstract

There is a war on youth, a war enacted through punitive policies and destructive popular representations of youth that wrongfully inform wider society. This study looks at the grassroots, non-profit, youth empowerment and violence prevention organization, Leave Out ViolencE (LOVE) in order to gain perspective on how youth are responding to this apparent war. This is achieved through describing the organization and providing an analysis on internal documentation and other data collected while researching *in-situ*. Further, it uses a qualitative lens to examine key concepts derived from interviews conducted with adult members of LOVE's Montreal community. Lastly, it performs a literary exploration and qualitative study of youth voice found in media produced by LOVE youth while at the organization. This study highlights the types of activities and approaches used by LOVE that promote ways for youth to challenge this war with its unfair representations that are inadequate, ill-informed and hostile. As evidenced in their written work and photography, youth are courageous, outspoken, strong and powerful.

LOVE & War

Résumé

Il y a une guerre sur les jeunes, une guerre mis en vigueur à travers des politiques punitives et des représentations populaires destructives des jeunes qui informent la societé au large injustifiablement. Cette étude regarde l'organisation de base, à but non lucrative, Projet LOVE: Vivre sans violence (LOVE) qui travail avec les adolescents sur la prévention de la violence afin d'obtenir une perspective sur comment les jeunes réagissent à cette guerre apparente. Ceci est atteint par décrire l'organisation et de fournir une analyse sur la documentation interne et d'autres données recueillies pendant la recherche sur lieu. De plus, il utilise une lentille qualitative pour examiner les concepts clés dérivés des entrevues réalisées avec des membre adultes de la communauté montréalaise de LOVE. Finalement, il effectue une exploration littéraire et étude qualitative de la voix des jeunes trouvé dans les medias produits par les jeunes de LOVE durant leur temps à l'organisation. Cette étude met en lumière les types d'activités et approaches utilisées par LOVE que promouvoir des moyens pour que les jeunes trouve le pouvoir de défier cette guerre avec ses représentations injuste qui sont inadéquats, mal informé et hostile. Comme en témoigne leur travail écrit et photographie, les jeunes sont courageux, franc, fort, et puissant.

LOVE & War

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LOVE & War

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LOVE & War

<u>Dedication</u> in two parts:

It is with deep sadness but in great honour that I dedicate this thesis to the late Olivier Tsai. You were an amazing philanthropist and many lives were touched by your work and devotion, including mine. The world can ill afford to lose you.

It is with great hope and love that I dedicate this thesis to my sons, Django and Gideon. You are my life. With every ounce of my being, I hope to make this world a healthier and happier place for you to grow up in. I love you to the ends of the universe, and back.

LOVE & War

Chapter One: "Speak Your Violence Instead"

Introduction

In 1991 a poem I wrote was published in an anthology of youth writing. I begin my story here because that poem marks a time of great transgression in my life. I was 14 years-old, a troubled youth, ready to say goodbye. The subject of my poem was suicide. That poem was never meant for publication. It was homework. Homework I had not planned on handing in. The poem was found by my foster mother who insisted that I change the ending. An ending I had left vague. After all, who knows what lays beyond the imaginings of death when in life? That night, I painstakingly sat writing at the dining room table with my foster mother beside me. There, I struggled to find a new ending. As it turned out, undertaking that task established a new beginning. The act of altering the ending of that poem forced me to look closely at my life, to look more deeply into what informed my existence, my impulses, my identity. It was an entry point into critical thinking and being reflexive. In that difficult journey I saw, for the first time, that I had the power to change the outcome of my life.

My foster mother, Geri, changed my life. After the poem, she insisted that I keep a diary of sorts and write as a pastime, as a means of releasing anxiety. Falling in love with this mode of communication, I was drawn to pursue an undergraduate degree in literature. Geri, the one adult who took the time to listen to me, not always hear, but listen she did, taught me to think critically. I learned to use my experiences as a troubled youth and to turn them into positive ideas to influence healthy outcomes; not always an easy task for this marginalized youth living in the system.

I was a system kid. That means I lived in social service facilities. For me, this included both foster homes and group homes. I remember thinking, during my stay in 'the system', that at times it felt as though the adult world actively worked against me and my peers, that adult society had little patience and space for us youth. It seemed as though I was often butting heads with social workers and care givers as to what would be best for me. At 13 years-old, I was thrown out of family court to cool off. The judge refused to see my point of view as valid or a valuable part of the conversation. Perhaps my approach was somewhat aggressive, but being actively resistant and boldly argumentative was how I knew to communicate. I later learned that the judge was in fact impressed with my courage to stand up for myself and with my determination to be heard fairly. Through the care of patient, sympathetic people like Geri, I became involved with youth based,

outreach programs intended for empowerment. I learned a great deal from the people who ran these programs. I learned how to communicate. I learned how to think critically about the world and how to live my ideas responsibly.

Rationale of the Study

When I began my journey in higher education, it became important that I seek to give something back to the community I had come from. I wanted to help troubled and marginalized youth find empowerment as I had. I began volunteering at a family centre in a youth empowerment group as an 'alumni of care' member. This title meant that my role was supportive of the youth in program. My assigned objective was to assist the staff with activities while acting as a positive role model for youth members. The organization's objectives were to empower youth who were nearing adulthood, to instill in them a kind of 'adult' savvy. They promoted, or so they said, independent and critical thinking that would eventually help the youth transition from living in 'the system' to being self-supportive when living on their own.

Unfortunately, my time in the group did not last long. After only a few months of going to the group's weekly, Tuesday night meetings, I began to sour towards the social workers. I left. I decided not to return after Christmas break but rather took the time to reflect upon my feelings towards the program, the people, the processes of empowerment. I found my ethical stance concerning the treatment of the youth in the program clashed with the ideologies of the group leaders. In my opinion, what was intended to be an empowering program was in fact teaching youth added reliance on a system that could not support them as adults. I also found the staffs' methods questionable as they were often openly critical and disrespectful towards youth members. This troubled me. There was too much adult involvement. Adult hands did the work the youth should have been doing themselves in order to become empowered. During these 'empowerment' sessions, it quickly became apparent that the people being empowered were those already holding power. That is to say, youth were asked to participate but then quickly shoved through the tasks at hand and, at times, even bumped aside for the sake of completion. Moreover, I observed youth being bribed into engaging. The deal breaker, however, came after witnessing one of the social workers, a person of obvious authority, smack a youth upside the head. The youth was obviously lost in space but this demeaning act was nonetheless wrong. When I gasped, the worker grinned and informed me that is was a cultural demonstration of affection.

LOVE & War

Upon reflection, what is evident from my time in this particular 'empowerment' group is the lack of willing and meaningful participation on the part of the youth. Why should they want to participate, after all, these youth were actively being ignored and silenced by those proclaiming to help give them voice. They were essentially being deskilled for the sake of an agenda that included them but did not involve them. The end product served the social workers' work portfolio and not those who needed the support.

Being involved with this program did inspire me. It is how I came to decide upon my thesis topic. Much of what I have experienced both as a former system kid and as an alumni of care has informed my desire to pursue a study on youth empowerment. It took some time but eventually I found the Leave Out ViolencE program (LOVE). LOVE is a youth empowerment organization that deals specifically with youth in relation to violence. They do violence prevention with victims, witnesses and perpetrators.

I was also greatly motivated to pursue this study after reading Henry Giroux's (2003b) book, *The abandoned generation: Democracy beyond the culture of fear*. I believe this work from Giroux is crucial in developing an understanding of how North American society views and behaves towards its youth. As Giroux observes:

> How a society understands its youth is partly determined by how it represents them. Popular representations, in particular, constitute a cultural politics that shapes, mediates, and legitimates how adult society views youth and what it expects from them. Such representations, produced and distributed through the mass media in television, video, music, film, publishing, and theatre, function as a form of public pedagogy actively attempting to define youth through the ideological filters of a society that is increasingly hostile to young people. (p.110)

Giroux believes that the negative portrayal of youth in popular media is just one of the blatant demonstrations of fear mongering in relation to youth presence in wider society. If youth are something to be feared, then how are we actually educating them to participate in society? Also, where does this fear come from and why is it so prevalent? It is not my intention to answer these questions directly. However, I will be working from them in order to develop a better understanding of the world youth inhabit. I believe that it is by developing understanding that we can actively learn how best to empower youth.

LOVE & War

Research Questions

Little research has been done on the Leave Out ViolencE youth empowerment organization. Because of the proven success of its programs, this study seeks to add this organization into the discussion of youth empowerment. Through a qualitative study of the Leave Out ViolencE organization, this research explores and unpacks a number of questions that have guided my research and findings:

- How are we actually educating youth to participate in society?
- How does a non-profit organization, whose focus is youth empowerment, help to diffuse negative stereotypes and misrepresentation of youth?
- What role can youth play in the movement to end violence, especially youth violence?
- How important is the position youth inhabit in relation to the violence that affects their lives?
- How does a violence prevention organization educate their youth members in critical thinking?
- How can empowerment help youth in finding a space for belonging in society?
- How can young people who are marginalized by the wider public sphere break free of their experiences of violence in order to achieve growth through critical thinking?
- How can real-life experiences be made into educational practices that promote independence and a sense of democratically civic values?

Objectives

I achieve my objective of bringing the Leave Out ViolencE organization into the discussion of youth empowerment by carrying out a qualitative study on the organization at three levels. I observe the workings of this grassroots, non-profit youth empowerment organization that works in violence prevention. I closely analyze the organization's documentation such as workshop lesson plans. I conduct personal interviews with adult members of the organization's Montreal community, and I study youth voice as expressed in various media formats that are available in the public domain and generated by youth through the various platforms of the organization. By looking at what youth are saying about their experiences, one can begin to see how they are transforming and how, possibly, they transgress limitation and the apparent war on youth.

LOVE & War

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research lies in the generating of new knowledge by bringing the Leave Out ViolencE organization into the discussion of youth empowerment. Information on methodologies for educating marginalized youth and moving away from the effects of harmful, negative treatment and perspectives is vital for a healthy citizenry—not to mention, healing from the effects of violence. I believe the success of the non-profit organization I have chosen to study lies in their methods. By methods, I mean to imply the environment LOVE generates with the youth, the involvement they require from the youth, how they invite youth into critically thinking about the world they inhabit, how they help to instill in youth elf-esteem and civic, philanthropic determination, how they invite youth into belonging to and with the community of LOVE.

Situating Myself in the Research

As the first lines of this thesis indicate, I have chosen to don a reflexive researcher's hat. I believe, as Etherington (2004) explains, reflexive research recognizes the impact that the researcher's history, experiences, ideas, identities, life has on their research subject and results. I believe that being reflexive in methodology helps to challenge personal assumptions and biases. This process has the potential to transform the researcher. Furthermore, undertaking a reflexive approach is, in my opinion, professionally responsible. As Freire (2009) suggests, action and reflection—praxis—is a practice of liberation. If youth are to become liberated through the process of empowerment, then it is my responsibility to them and to myself to be as aware and honest as possible as I take action against the war on youth, this is especially so since my research involves youth indirectly.

Coming from disenfranchisement, I have always been drawn towards understanding the processes of becoming—of transitioning—from a toxic and destructive life to that of an empowered existence. I have chosen to situate myself in the research as a means to fill a gap. I use personal anecdotes and relay narratives from my own youth as a means to indicate my sincerity in the youth empowerment process. Since youth voice is brought into this conversation from archives available in the public domain, I hope that my personal testimony, my experiences, might act as a kind of understudy. By no means do I presume that my own experiences reflect that of all youth, only that my own difficulties as a marginalized and troubled youth might serve as a mediator until such time that LOVE youth, interested in this conversation, become directly involved.

LOVE & War

Overview of the Thesis

  In Chapter One, I explained the rationale of this case study of the Leave Out ViolencE organization. I set up the relevant research questions that have guided my research. I lay out my research objectives, its significance and situated myself within the research as a process and as narrator.

  In Chapter Two, I provide a literature review. Here I set up the core ideas that have influenced my research and its outcomes. As well, with more detail, I lay out the theoretical understandings necessary to develop and undertake this research project. These include: the concept of 'war on youth' as laid out by Henry Giroux (2003b); youth violence and its prevention; empowerment theory and application through critical thinking and photovoice, as well as some of the common critiques on empowerment theory and practices; youth culture in relation to its impact on social structures; and lastly, identity as social construct in order to explore just how youth can challenge negative representations of themselves.

  Chapter Three maps out the methodologies behind the creation of this thesis and the ways that I learned about and became involved with LOVE. I explain the processes behind this three-part study and detail the techniques used to acquire information, access said information and analysis of the material for each section.

  Chapter Four is the findings chapter. It starts with document analysis. I then go on to examine six key concepts that were revealed to me through a qualitative research approach in interviews conducted with adult members of LOVE's Montreal community. Finally, I conduct a literary exploration of youth voice from media produced by the LOVE youth.

  Chapter Five is a summary of this case study of the Leave Out ViolencE program. By way of detailing some results, I lay out brief answers to the many research questions that have guided my study. I commit to recognizing the limitations of studying youth voice without their direct involvement. I assess the significance of my research findings and lay out my recommendations for future study.

LOVE & War

Chapter Two: "Youths Didn't Invent Crime": Literature Review

Introduction

At the core of this thesis, the overall theme of education weaving a narrative of liberation and transgression is greatly influenced by critical theorist and pedagogue Paulo Freire from his work *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (2009). As well as, bell hooks' seminal work *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom* (1994).

In this chapter I map out the theoretical understandings necessary to this research project. In the first section, I begin by presenting the concept of 'war on youth' as stated by education scholar Henry Giroux. In this section we see how popular culture works to inform society and how governments, schools and policies are becoming excessively punitive in relation to youth.

The second section offers a theoretical overview of youth violence. Violence plays a role in society. Apropos, juxtaposing this are findings from studies on youth violence prevention programs. I set up the argument, that through critical thinking, we can seriously effect a violence prevention movement.

In the third section, is an exploration of empowerment theory. Here I discuss two streams of successful empowerment strategies: critical thinking and photovoice. Learning critical thinking can lead to living reflexively. It inspires action in changing the situation of oppression. Photovoice with its three part process of recording life, stimulating dialogue and ability to affect policy breaks silences while impacting both the photographer and their audiences (Mitchell & Allnutt, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2006; Wang & Burris, 1997). At this point it is necessary to situate, briefly, some of the critiques of empowerment theory and practices by way of stating a clear understanding.

In the fourth section I look at cultural theory in order to gain perspective on the social impact of youth culture. Cultural theory establishes tension which facilitates a production of meaning through multiple perspectives, a vantage point of the social sciences. Specifically, youth subculture has had a history of making waves, so to speak (Hall, 1992; Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1977). By taking note of the ebbs and flows of culture and its impact, the roles youth culture plays in compounding and combating social hostility becomes clear.

Lastly, in the fifth section I bridge culture with identity theory. Because identity is a social construct, youth are forced to negotiate their identities through an antiquated system of codes which set up normalized expectations. Identities are always in communication with the world

through how they represent and through how they are represented by others. From this point, I return to the notion that there is a war on youth and that youth are challenging representations by becoming empowered through critical thinking.

War on Youth

As a mother of two young children, I know in my heart that they are the future. As the song "The greatest love of all" says, "Children are our future/ teach them well and let them lead the way…" (Masser & Creed, 1977). But what happens when they are forsaken? Or worse, made the enemy? Henry Giroux (2003b) believes that there is a war on youth and—I agree.

This is not war in a *traditional* sense of active conflict visible through the use of metallic or nuclear weaponry. But rather, this war is being enacted politically. Democracy is one of the primary strategic targets of this particular war, and its effects on youth are devastating. "We are witnessing the ongoing privatization of public schools, health care, prisons, transportation, the military, public air waves, public lands, and other crucial elements of the commons along with the undermining of our most basic civil liberties" (Giroux, 2012, n.p.). Giroux (2012) goes on to explain that privatization serves the interests of corporate elitists and "puts such goods in the hands of market-based fundamentalists who can exercise control over the production of identities, values, modes of agency and dissent" (n.p.). Young people are exceptionally vulnerable to the effects of privatization.

Giroux (2012) explains that young people are devalued and told that complacency is the only acceptable response.

> They are viewed as unproductive, excess and utterly expendable. But the discourse of redundancy has a darker side, one that reveals not just a society that is no longer willing to invest in poor minority and white youth, but also a social order that views many young people as a prime target of its governing through youth crime complex. (Giroux, 2012, n.p.)

Young people are a threat to authority (Clarke, Hall, Jefferson & Roberts, 2006; Giroux, 2003b; Giroux, 2012; Hall & Jefferson, 1993). Therefore, the use of politics to mitigate their possible roles serves the advancement of prevailing dominant ideologies and structures. A country's people is said to be its most valuable resource. Then, to explain this non-traditional warfare, the *expendable* youth find themselves commodified into examples of how to behave, or not to and are made example of through the use of popular culture.

LOVE & War

   Representations depicting youth as wayward, as slackers, as defunct are ubiquitous in popular culture. From films such as Larry Clark's *Kids* (1995) and Paul Weitz and Chris Weitz's *American pie* (1999), to long standing sitcoms like Matt Groening's *The Simpsons* (1989 to present) we see a common narrative of youth that shows little actual understanding, compassion or empathy for their personhood as individuals. Moreover there is an absence of actual youth voice. Instead, we see a treatment of youth that is both projected and understood through 'ideologically flawed' filters (Giroux, 1997). As Giroux goes on to write: "Popular representations, in particular, constitute a cultural politics that shaped, mediates and legitimates how adult society views youth and what it expects from them" (Giroux, 2003b, p. 110). With regards to the more common popular representation of youth, like in the ones mentioned above, it would seem that adult society cannot and should not expect much out of youth who put morals aside in order to spend most of their time seeking sexual conquests and popularity (Giroux, 1997). Granted, there are the occasional success stories making heart-warming drama in which a remarkable youth overcomes peer pressures and their dysfunctional, youthful urges in order to become something great, like in Gus Van Sant's *Good Will Hunting* (1997). But these stories of incredible achievement only serve to exacerbate social hostilities towards youth. By setting unrealistic standards and pitting youth against the incredible or rare success story, youth are instantly facing rejection. It is not just that there looms the potential for failure. By setting standards that do not reflect the individual as a unique situation (Beauvoir, 1949/1999) with uncountable possibilities and by not recognizing individual capabilities outside arbitrary yet normalized expectations (Butler, 1999), is to privilege and prioritize those who conform.

   By conformity I am signaling a very complex set of structures which impose invisible yet effective guidelines for expected social conduct, or rather, *normalized* conduct. As Foucault writes (1995) "The Normal is established as a principle of coercion in teaching with the introduction of a standardized education" (p. 184). He goes on to explain that normal

> is established in the standardization of industrial processes and products. […] Like surveillance and with it, normalization becomes one of the great instruments of power at the end of the classical age. For the marks that once indicated status, privilege and affiliation were increasingly replaced - or at least supplemented - by a whole range of degrees of normality indicating membership of a homogeneous social body but also

LOVE & War

        playing a part in classification, hierarchization and the distribution of rank (Foucault, 1995,

        p. 184).

As will be explored below in the section on youth culture, socially sanctioned categories of normalization inform our potential roles and behaviours within society. In the case of youth, we see increasing surveillance as a means to enforce conformity to *the normal* (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010; Giroux, 2012). Regardless of what that normal classifies as in terms of morals and values, or right and wrong (albeit these are likely defined by those holding power), they serve as models that are distributed through popular representations. It is through the legislated surveillance of youth encased in different social narratives that youth find themselves negotiating the expectations of normalized conduct.

        This works on many levels. For one, if a youth acts the part of delinquent seeking whatever conquest of fancy (or so popular portrayals most readily demonstrate), she or he is fulfilling an expected role of youth as acting youthful who is begging authoritative intervention. However, if a youth chooses to follow protocol, seek success and comply with social ordering, then she or he is yet again playing party to the same structures of normalization only in this story, she or he is assigning their self to an *acceptable* class, position and rank. Regardless of their individual choices, be they naughty or nice, youth conform to some kind of normalized social conduct. Their choices however have quite different, and at times very severe, outcomes.

        It can be assumed that whatever individual youth choose will yield related results. However this is not the reality of youth who are marginalized in and by society, not to mention that these same young people are already at a disadvantage due to their age (Giroux, 2012). Considering the privatization of once publicly protected safeguards like schools and health care (Giroux, 2003b; Giroux, 2012; Soling, 2009), youth who are marginalized by their identities are experiencing greater consequences for choices they may have had little alternative to. Marginalized youth living the culture of poverty find themselves more routinely signaled out in situations that render choice moot. For example, public policing programs that use stereotyping penalize the poor while fulfilling mandates set by the ruling class.

        Stories like this 'Clean Halls' program are beginning to make me see that journalists like

        myself have undersold the white-collar corruption story in recent years by ignoring its flip

        side. We have two definitely connected phenomena, often treated as separate and

> unconnected: a growing lawlessness in the financial sector and an expanding, repressive,
> increasingly lunatic police apparatus trained at the poor and especially the nonwhite poor.
> (Giroux, 2012, n.p., citing Taibbi, 2012)

This is a prime example of hating the poor rather than hating the situation of poverty. Redirecting public attention towards the dissenters is in effect a smoke screen which allows for those in power to act with impunity and in abuse against the human rights of people who more crucially need help and protection.

Giroux insists (2003b) that negative popular representations of youth serve as a kind of 'public pedagogy'. He is not alone as can be seen in the work of Levinsen and Wien (2011). These destructive portrayals of youth identity project an interpretation of youth that is based on a coding system that is already set up against them (Butler, 1999). As Faucher observes: "The very words used to describe a phenomenon will impact [the] production of meaning" in relation to it (p. 440). The idea of youth as a social pariah is certainly not new (Smith, 1979, citing Coe, 1920). The difference now is how easily this stereotype is propagated. It is so clearly effective that youth themselves believe it and invest in its reality (Fleetwood, 2011; Soep, 2006). By enacting stereotypical roles such as the gangster or the slacker, youth are acting as 'expected' which invariably reaffirms the cultural stereotype (Fleetwood, 2011; Soep, 2006; Willis, 1977). Furthermore, these representations serve to inform the population, governments and educational policies. Bad policies put into action by governments who are increasingly hostile towards youth are not called into question or contested by a population who is grossly misinformed. Something is amiss in society when zero tolerance policies punish children for being children (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010; Wald, 2001), when places intended for growth and learning begin to resemble prisons (Giroux, 2003b; Soling, 2009), when governments spend more yearly on incarceration than on academic bursaries (Robinson, 2010), when policies intended to support and encourage academic achievement and pursuit actually silences most children and leaves them in despair over their education (Giroux, 2003b), and when education reform becomes detrimental to the integral development of the person (Comeau & Lavalle, 2008). What these policies reflect is the existence of a very real, very effective social anxiety about youth.

When punishing youth becomes a standardized practice, when North American society actively demonstrates a lack of compassion and understanding for those they are responsible for

LOVE & War

(Giroux, 2003b), it should become obvious that the war on youth has reached a point of crisis. Negative popular representations along with unfavourable policies inform the public and the very spaces in which youth negotiate their daily lives (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010; Giroux, 2003b; Soling, 2009). In all types of urban settings, just like in schools who routinely enforce zero tolerance policies, youth are finding themselves increasingly under surveillance and unwanted (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010; Soling, 2009). Youth are being aggressively expelled from places that were once intended for their leisure or to congregate in. Public parks and public transportation providers set curfews with strict by-laws which permit the harsh, punitive treatment of youth who might act 'questionably' (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010). This ambiguous term permits too wide a range of interpretation for those holding authority. In the current trend of correctional treatment of youth (Giroux, 2003b; Soling, 2009; Wagman Borowsky, Widome & Resnick, 2008), there seems to be little room for innocence before a judgement of guilty is laid. Absurdly, however, this should come as no surprise since judge and jury are the same (Beauvoir, 1949/1999). The whole leads to an ominous notion of youth whose behaviour is routinely pathologized (Wagman Borowsky et al., 2008). They become a force that needs to be dealt with, rather than a large segment of our population who should be nurtured and supported in their development and integration into adulthood.

Youth Violence

The war on youth may seem justifiable. Youth violence is real. Youth violence is described as a public health concern (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001; Dodge, 2001; Wagman Borowsky et al., 2008; Zimmerman et al., 2010). But what does this mean? How is violence defined or understood? In a generalized sense, violence can be understood as the use of aggression or force by one person against another with the intention to harm (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001). This definition has been broadened to include "psychological harm, maldevelopment, and deprivation" (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001, p. 3). To be clear, this thesis also recognizes drug and alcohol abuse, and self-harm as acts of violence. Is youth violence on the rise?

Statistical findings published around the turn of the millennia suggest that the volume of reported violent acts is somewhat stable with the 1980 numbers (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001; Dodge, 2001), although these numbers have seen rises and falls over the last few decades. But what does this mean? Considering that media plays a hand in increasing our awareness of violence (Clarke et

LOVE & War

al., 2006; Giroux, 2003b; Levinsen & Wien, 2011), is actual youth violence on the rise? Or, is it that our awareness of the presence of youth violence has become more acute? Seeing that the definition of violence is changeable, what is considered violence today may permit a far broader spectrum of events than what might have simply been considered tom-foolery a few decades ago. The story told through studies on violence, through the use of numbers and reported violence related phenomena, is that there is a tendency to pathologize poor behaviour rather than finding solutions to it (Wagman Borowsky et al., 2008). That said, in order to find solutions, we must first understand where violence comes from.

Can it be that violence is innate (Olivier, Interview, January 25, 2013), or that as humans mature, one tends to lose the need to use violence as a tool of communication? Dahlberg and Potter (2001) suggest that very young children who connect with violence as a means of expression are more likely to carry the habit of violence into their adult years. Comparatively, those who learn violence later in childhood are less likely to carry the impulse towards violent acts into adulthood. Wagman Borowsky et al. (2008) situate political and social instability as major contributing factors to youth violence. A notion which supports the idea that in uneasy times, when people feel their values threatened and are unable to identify the sources of their anxiety, their 'moral panic', they turn towards a 'scapegoat', a place upon which they can rest their fear (Hall & Jefferson, 1993, p. 71-72)—in this case, that place is youth. Youth and respectively, youth culture, embody a notion of change; change can be threatening, especially to long standing institutions of power (Hall & Jefferson, 1993). Dodge (2001) determines that violence manifests at the intersection between person and culture. More explicitly, violent behaviour manifests itself where cultural forces and a human failure to progress or develop meet. Albeit, Dodge (2001) insists that familial problems and anti-social tendencies are the central reasons for violent behaviour in youth. On a different note, can humans be inherently good? Sir Ken Robinson (2010) believes they are. But, when faced with difficulties due to challenging or bad circumstances such as extreme poverty and/or bad living conditions, humans are forced to make poor decisions often ending up in acts of violence. What these experts on youth violence share is the idea that violence has cause (Wagman Borowsky et al., 2008). If there is a source, then there exists the potential for prevention.

I do not believe that the only solution is for each case of violence to be dissected until its root cause is totally revealed. What I do believe, is that rather than focusing on the immediate or root

causes, which can be utterly limitless (for example, socio-economic, cultural, or inherited), it is perhaps more forgiving to recognize, as Sir Ken Robinson (2010) does, that people in difficult situations often make difficult choices even if it means using violence. This is especially so when "societal norms and values [] support violence behavior by endorsing and teaching violence as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts" (Wagman Borowsky et al., 2008, p. 678) as is evident with sanctioned political warfare (Chomsky, 2005). If violence is innate and learned, and it is used to satisfy political needs and wants, is it fair that youth are being singled out and grossly punished? Nevertheless, "violence is preventable" (Wagman Borowsky et al., 2008, p. 676).

Youth violence prevention. As with the various ideas on the origins of violence, violence prevention comes in many forms. For one, finding protection in a sense of 'connectedness' with others is said to reduce risk factors that lead to violence (Borowski citing Resnick *et al.*, 1997; Dahlberg & Potter, 2001; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Zimmerman et al., 2010). Risk or risky behaviour is often based in individual choice, although these choices are informed by wider social influences and contexts (Wilson, Minkler, Dasho, Wallerstein & Martin, 2008, citing others). Dalhberg & Potter (2001) suggest that the greatest challenge to prevention is addressing risk. Risk factors include: tendencies towards aggression, victimization, mental and physical health issues, anti-social behaviour, the breakdown of family structure and a general lack of support. In response, community, or 'connectedness', is said to promote health, achievement, competence and "strong social skills" (Wagman Borowski et al., 2008, p. 679), it diminishes tendencies towards delinquency (Dhalberg & Potter, 2001), and inspires character development, caring and compassion (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003, citing Lerner et al., 2000). Wagman Borowski et al. (2008) propose that developing a community mind-set based in a culture of peace would yield huge successes in violence prevention. "Programs that address developmental needs, remove barriers, and foster support for healthy development across a variety of contexts are key to preventing violence", write Dahlberg and Potter (2001, p. 11). As can be seen in the later analysis of LOVE, critical thinking and photovoice are used successfully by youth empowerment and youth development programs whose focus is violence prevention.

Wagman Borowsky et al., (2008) suggests that, as with disease control, the dissemination and sharing of successful violence prevention models works to eliminate or reduce the existence of violence. If youth violence is defined as a public health concern, then it is at the point of policy

LOVE & War

where we must design solutions. Granted, as identified in the above section 'war on youth', policies can be crippling to the development of youth. However, it is quite possible that with the right support networks all working towards finding solutions, towards building a culture of peace, policy with its broad reach, can also serve to protect youth politically (Wagman Borowski et al., 2008, p. 682). This is especially so when critically minded and politically engaged youth are informing policy makers (Wilson, Dasho, Martin, Wallerstein, Wang & Minkler, 2007 citing Wang & Burris, 1994; Zimmerman et al., 2010). The above thinkers, academics and experts are contributing to the very necessary conversation about the very real issue of youth violence. They are working to better inform the public. They unite in their belief in the importance of critical thinking in relation to violence prevention in youth (Comeau & Lavalle, 2008; Freire, 2009; Giroux, 2003a; hooks, 1994; Wagman Borowski et al, 2008).

Empowerment

Programs that set out to empower youth vary greatly in methodology, even if they have similar objectives. They typically aim to provide meaningful experiences in safe and welcoming environments where relationships are built, where a sense of 'connectedness' with peers, mentors and community leaders is nurtured, and where personal and community growth is fostered (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger Messias & McLoughlin, 2006; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Empowerment means that individuals develop new positive and productive life skills along with confidence and courage. Participants in such program typically learn to apply healthy decision making processes in their lives and in their communities (Zimmerman et al., 2010). Empowerment comes when the individual develops a critical consciousness, a capacity for critical thinking along with an ability for personal reflection, which eventually leads to social action (Cohen, Kahne, Bowyer, Middaugh & Rogowski, 2012; Freire, 2009; Jennings et al., 2006; Mitchell, De Lange & Nyugen, 2008; Wilson et al., 2008). "Empowerment is a multi-level construct" (Jennings et al., 2006, p. 32) intended to improve the quality of life by working with and through the many contexts of lived experiences (Jennings et al., 2006, citing many others.).

Empowerment through critical thinking. "The power to think critically" writes Greene (2007), "is a necessity for personal growth as much as it is for the sustenance of a free society--if not the creation of democracy" (p. 3). Empowerment is achieved not solely by resolving to make better the situation of oppression but by instilling an ability to critically identify and address

systems of abuse that cause injustice. Or, as Freire (2009) termed it, conscientization. Conscientization is a process of becoming critically aware. It is the process of coming to a conscious and conscientious understanding of one's existence in society and the forces around us which influences our experiences and our being in the world (Freire, 2009).

Critical thinking is part of a process in which people, once oppressed, find themselves newly humanized. As Freire (2009) explains, the oppressed have internalized a crippling understanding of their person, their existence, their presence in the world. They perceive of themselves "as powerless, voiceless, lacking the tools of literacy" (Greene, 2007, p. 2); without tools to communicate they believe their stories to be of little importance and of little influence on the world (Freire, 2009). Further immobilizing them is the belief that their fate is sealed. Often, people who are silenced do not believe their stories matter in the grand scheme of life. Greene (2007) believes "the self does not preexist; it is chosen, [] 'in the course of action'" (Greene, 2007, p.3, citing theoretical concepts from Dewey, Arendt, and Freire). She explains, "choice and action: both entail a rejection of stasis and passivity. To choose demands an ability to look beyond what seems given and unchangeable" (p. 3). This process of emergence from a place of oppression is a reward of being educated in critical thinking; of a newly formed ability to 'look' at the world and know that it is vital to ask questions, be they simple or complex, and of being certain that the answers are not the truth but are rather a truth amongst many.

The newly empowered become capable of praxis. Praxis means to live reflexively and actively committing to changing the situation of oppression of the self, the community, the world (Freire, 2009). In today's neo-liberal, pro-labour market education (Comeau & Lavalle, 2008; Dahlberg & Potter, 2001; Fleetwood, 2011; Freire, 2009; Giroux, 2003a; Giroux, 2003b; Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison & Weigel, 2006; Willis, 1977), it is important that youth are able to find for themselves individuality and self-worth. It is also important that they are able to see past the depersonalization and silencing tactics of current curricula and education policies with their "high-stake testing, fixed standards, 'bell curves', accountability, and the rest" (Greene, 2007, p. 1). In a climate where the alienation and silencing of youth is common practice, equipping youth with the power to think critically and engage responsibly with wider society is to help them to move from the margins into the broader conversation about their roles and potential roles in the general functioning of our society.

LOVE & War

Empowerment programs see different yet specific end goals that inform the structure and success of the programs (Jenkins et al., 2006; Jennings et al, 2006). Generally speaking though, empowerment is the act of passing through the threshold of simply existing as is into a state of awareness and living with a purpose for the betterment of the self and others (Cohen et al., 2012; Jenkins et al., 2006; Jennings et al, 2006). Prevention in itself forms a kind of rehabilitation through techniques that help individuals to find true power within, power to overcome obstacles in their lives, power to find and live meaningfully in creative ways (Robinson, 2010). It is learning to recognize what needs to be changed and for what purposes (Jennings et al., 2006). Within youth empowerment is the capacity to recognize, to contribute and to collaborate for meaningful change (Mitchell, Walsh & Moletsane, 2006). Youth in empowerment programs are collectively creating new culture that sees their identities as reflected as strong, capable and engaged citizens (Cohen et al., 2012; Jenkins et al., 2006; Jennings, et al., 2006).

Empowerment through photovoice. Tools used in many youth empowerment programs include photography, critical dialogue, skits and/or role playing, writing, creating public service announcements and community work (Hoeschmann & Low, 2008; Jenkins et al., 2006; Jennings et al., 2006). Since the LOVE programs began as photojournalism projects, I have chosen to situate part of my analysis in photovoice. Photovoice is a powerful and provocative research methodology of the social science because of its ability to challenge assumptions about representation (Mitchell & Allnutt, 2008; Wang & Burris, 1997).

Photovoice has a three part process. First, it is the act of recording life through taking photographs. These captured stories reflect both strengths and weaknesses in the photographer's life. After all, "people are experts in their own lives" (Mitchell & Allnutt, 2008, citing Wang et al., 2004). Secondly, these images are intended to inspire critical dialogue about what is or is not represented in the world of the photograph, ergo, the social conditions of the photographer. Thirdly, these portraits along with dialogue outcomes are intended to inform policy changes (Mitchell & Allnutt, 2008; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wilson et al., 2007; Zimmerman et al., 2010). This last step, I believe, is accomplished through both directly and indirectly influencing policy makers. This is achieved through developing awareness and compassion for the cause through educating and dialoguing with community members and beyond. Ideally this acts like a 'public pedagogy' through challenging paradigms of representation. Certainly, creating awareness with

the intension of change is slightly simplistic (Wilson et al., 2007). However, when working at a distance from people who make policy, dialogue must begin somewhere if it is ever to reach those in power.

Challenging assumptions about representation opens possibilities of awareness. Asking important questions about context, influence and temporality with regards to the outsider, the underserved, the marginalized, the silenced is a process of emergence and transgression from forced normalized social structures: who/what is present; what is/is not being said; who is/is not represented; how; for what/who's purpose (Wilson et al., 2007). "Images have the power to disrupt silences by making visible what is difficult to put into words" (Mitchell et al., 2006, p. 1). Images help to lessen the power and negative effects of forced silence. They have a way to impact audiences, especially when it invokes a 'personal connection' with the subject matter (Mitchell, 2008). In bringing the outsider's perspectives to social science research, one observes the "protagonists [] taking action" (Mitchell et al., 2006, p. 1) on issues that are of importance to them and their communities. Photovoice helps to break silences.

Photographs are objects that have a capacity to talk (Mitchell & Allnutt, 2008, p. 252) while they also open the self up to the world. "Objects serve as entry point for the telling of stories about the self" (Mitchell & Allnutt, 2008, p. 256, citing Riggins, 1994). As a reflexive researcher these kindred moments of making oneself vulnerable to the critique of others bridges silences through acts of meaningful exchange. These objects, be they what is revealed inside the image or the image itself, and be they connotative or denotative in meaning, are part of a larger process of meaning making and meaningful expression. Thus, behind the documenting of lived experiences and related objects is process (Mitchell & Allnutt, 2008). It is a very powerful process in telling. Life is given meaning through the process of story telling (Greene, 2008, citing Sartre). Each story is worth telling. (Greene, 2007). The process can be "challenging, freeing, and expansive" (Mitchell & Allnutt, 2008). It can have significant impact on both the photographer/documenter and their audience(s). To reiterate, it can make visible what was previously unseen. Photovoice used in empowerment programs provides voice, promotes critical dialogue, enhances knowledge creation through bridging alternative perspectives and yields new cultural productions with the possibility of informing policy (Mitchell et al., 2006; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wilson et al., 2007; Wilson et al., 2008; Zimmerman et al., 2010).

LOVE & War

Critique of empowerment theory and practices. I begin this section with a very powerful statement about focus:

> It is necessary [] in planning our movements, in guiding our future development, that at times we rise above the pressing, but smaller questions of separate schools and cars, wage-discrimination and lynch law, to survey the whole question of race in human philosophy and to lay, on a basis of broad knowledge and careful insight, those large lines of policy and higher ideals which may form our guiding line and boundaries in the practical difficulties of every day. For it is certain that all human striving must recognize the hard limits of natural law, and that any striving, no matter how intense and earnest, which is against the constitution of the world, is vain (Du Bois, 2003).

Working towards empowerment must be a reflexive process for all concerned, that it be truly liberating. In order to complete the processes of liberation one must expose and render ineffective the powers of oppression (Freire, 2009). This process of empowerment is not always a straight forward path. As is stated in the critique of empowerment theory, not enough has been written analyzing or qualifying the theory (Archibald & Wilson, 2011). It is often 'abstract' and 'utopic' (Ellsworth, 1989). Because of this, Archibald and Wilson (2011) believe that there remains the possibility of the co-optation of empowerment theory by neo-liberal ideologues who suffer antinomian ideals (Archibald & Wilson, 2011). That, and the threat of non-reflexive leftist politicians mindlessly distracting constituents with fanciful empowerment rhetoric (Archibald & Wilson, 2011). Division in the rhetoric of empowerment adds to the critique of empowerment theory and to the complexity of defining it. As Inglis (2011) states, "empowerment involves people developing capacities to act successfully within the existing system and structures of power, while emancipation concerns critically analyzing, resisting and challenging structures of power" (Archibald & Wilson, 2011, p. 22, citing Inglis, 1997). In the different nuances of the above quotation we understand that one is meant for success within structures and the other is meant to challenge them. To this I would argue, that both skills sets are needed to effect empowerment. It is by knowing how systems and structures of power operate that they can be properly and rightfully challenged. Often, it is by working from the inside that we can effect better the changes we see as needed. I would add as well that what is obviously amiss with empowerment

theory, as it is with many other distinct branches of theory—they are available for the picking, but this is part and parcel of being an attractive ideology.

Another critique of empowerment theory is in its application within the community at the program level. As Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger Messias and McLoughlin (2006) point out, empowerment programs differ greatly in how they share power dynamics. Consequently, youth empowerment and the communities of empowerment suffer due to unequal distribution of authority, of power (Jennings et al., 2006). Empowerment is not just to treat the symptoms of oppression but a learned ability to recognize, to challenge, to critique power imbalances (Ellsworth, 1989). Programs that do not share power dynamics as one of their primary objectives indicates a lack of clear and meaningful dialogue between the learners and the teachers. Ellsworth (1989) determines that the best solutions to power imbalances within classrooms comes when the teachers becomes "the learner of the student's reality and knowledge" (p. 306). Critical awareness of oppressive structures and processes should be as much the community's goal and practice as it is for the learner. Since I believe that true empowerment for the purposes of emancipation comes at the learning of critical thinking, then, if empowerment is to be achieved, meaningful dialogue between the different members of the community is a priority.

A further critique of empowerment programs is interdependency. As Zimmerman (2000) explains, "individual, organization, and community empowerment are mutually interdependent and are both a cause and a consequence of each other" (p. 46). Where philanthropic organizations are concerned, there is an expected end date due to achievement. Remaining too closely knit with a community and their practices may have its own set of shortcomings in terms of benevolence and allowances. In the case of youth, it is well worth finding youth well integrated within their community of learning, however encouraging them to broaden their minds further by stepping outside the community may better serve the needs of the individual youth, who might inevitably return anew, better equipped to help the community.

Youth Culture

Studying youth culture itself offers a critical lens on the phenomenon of youth identity. It serves to represent a process of how youth reproduce their identities. Youth culture is often looked at within the broad category of Cultural Studies and is included here as a means of deepening an

understanding for studying youth and the ways that they shape, create and transform their lived experiences while negotiating for power within wider society.

Since its emergence as a distinctive field of study in the 1960s, Cultural Studies has come to be a powerful theoretical tool that is often cited when studying youth (see Giroux, 1997; Giroux, 2003b; Hoeschmann & Low, 2008). Cultural studies "holds theoretical and political questions in an ever irresolvable but permanent tension" (Hall, 1992, p. 284), a tension that is crucial for disrupting the war on youth with its power to misrepresent. This tension yields a flexibility of thinking which allows the researcher to gain multiple perspectives with the potential of entering the conversation from numerous viewpoints. From this comes the possibility of studying youth identity and youth culture in detail beyond a limiting or conventional analysis. At this point, one can begin to sympathize with culture as both a process and a product (Hebdige, 1979).

In terms of process, for example, observing working-class youth culture in the 1970s reveals how the control culture, typically the ruling class (Hall & Du Gay, 1996; Willis, 1977), attempts to maintain social positioning, such as class (Willis, 1977). By being actively defiant towards authority, working-class youth are not adequately addressing issues like class disparity which can likely be a symptom of a cultural process of subordination wherein dominant ideologies are imposed as unconscious structures of understanding (Hedbige, 1979, citing Althusser's concept) through areas like education. Studying the behaviours of working-class youth reveals how these youth feel that they have achieved something and how they find satisfaction in their defiance. By doing so they are unknowingly playing into institutional structures of power. Being educated for the labour market, after all, is a strategy of oppression (Comeau & Lavalle, 2008; Dahlberg & Potter, 2001; Fleetwood, 2011; Freire, 2009; Giroux, 2003a; Giroux, 2003b; Jenkins et al., 2006; Willis, 1977). As Aronowitz writes: "The intention of the school system was not to achieve quality, but quite the reverse: to reinforce inequality" (1981, p. x).

Culture as product is more tangible, yet no less complex. For instance, observing youth subcultural trends in the 1970s reveals how style as a mode or discourse of resistance has a shelf life. Youth subculture at that time, like punk rock for instance, held a politically subversive and socially disruptive stance. However, when punk rock style and music became assimilated into regular culture, or the mainstream, it was made to reestablish subordination (Hebdige, 1979). Youth subculture, therefore, is both a product of defiance and a commodity for submission. Since

LOVE & War

dominant ideologies are constantly being challenged, they must reestablish themselves through newer outlets; hegemony is not 'given' so it must be maintained (Hebdige, 1979). Therefore it fashions itself to the identity of the rebel-rousers and attempts to restore social order. What is evident is that youth have the capacity to disrupt structures of power. So powerful is youth presence that their culture becomes co-opted and assimilated into the mainstream. This point alone can stand as partial explanation as to why there is a war on youth.

Identity as Social Construct

Speaking of identity as a social construct, Hall (1996) writes that

identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiple constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation… . Actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation. (p.4)

Identity is not inherent. It is learned (Beauvoir, 1949/1999; Butler, 1999; Fausto-Sterling, 2000). It is informed by how we live in the world, with whom we live, with how we perceive of ourselves, of how we perceive of others. We engage with the world with every action we make and the world influences us in return, but not always as a response to this; to note, we are never not engaging with the world we inhabit (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). To paraphrase Butler (1999), there is no particular identity behind its particular expression; "that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (p. 25). You cannot divide the chicken from the egg. They are essentially one. Just as we are one with the world we inhabit. We cannot live outside it and, existentially, it cannot exist without our being within it. Therefore, we live within a kind of reciprocal relationship with the world: it informs as we inform. Although this relationship is not balanced.

Our existence is based in a system of understanding which predates us (Butler, 1999; Hall & Du Gay, 1996). The language system we use to access meaning is a system of symbols imbued with predetermined values (Butler, 1999; Mead, 2003). It is a spectrum of values that determine

worth at a societal level. This coded system is rife with normalizing ideologies. After all, we live in "a society of normalization" (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p.8, citing Foucault). This flawed system ultimately yields privileges when determining self-worth (Butler, 1999; Fausto-Streling, 2000). If you are capable of existing within social structures then your value is as it performs: you are normal. If you live on the margins, if you challenge the status quo, if you disrupt the hegemonic structures and codes that make up society, your value is also as it performs: you are a dissenter. However, nothing is fixed (Hall, 1992). Our evaluative capacities negotiating with the world we inhabit is in a continuous state of exchange (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, citing Grozs). This complicated yet significant argument is by way of indicating that if our self is in a constant state of exchange with the world which is continuously influencing our various identities, than we are in a perpetual state of becoming (Hall & Du Gay, 1996). "Identity emerges from the various selves the individual has achieved along a developmental continuum" (Minton & McDonald, 1984, p. 92). In this constant act of becoming we are always in communication with the world. We do so through how we represent our identities. To be clear, how we represent ourselves, how we are represented in return, how anything is represented, in fact, is part of how we communicate with the world around us. Communicating with the world beyond our self is the only way to challenge wrongful representations that can have unpleasant implications on how we live in the world. As we will see in chapter four, youth are working at changing normalized paradigms of representation. Through learning how to think critically, youth are negotiating for power from which to challenge social structures.

Summary of Chapter Two

In essence, then, this chapter has laid out the key theoretical underpinnings of the thesis. In so doing it began by highlighting the belief that there is a war on youth. It then goes on to review the literature on youth violence. In the section of empowerment I describe how critical thinking helps individuals to think reflexively about their lives. That thinking critically also leads to action in changing the situation of oppression. In empowerment through photovoice I describe how images have the power to challenge assumptions about representation; that images disrupt silences and in so doing impact people. Photovoice captures life in both direct and indirect ways, inspires dialogue and has the capacity to inform policy makers through providing voice where one was not possible before. Lastly I explore three areas of critique in empowerment theory and practices. For

one, abstract and idealistic theory might inadvertently serve to counter its intended objective by being appropriated into different agendas. Empowerment programs often have power sharing unbalances which works counter intuitive to the process of empowerment. Lastly there exists the possibility of dependency problems between empowerment organizations and their members.

In the section on culture I explain how Cultural Studies as a field of study supports the social sciences in bringing tension into the argument, a process that permits multiple perspectives and inspires the creation of knowledge. By example one can see how different strata of culture work counter to one another, usually in order to re-establish the dominant culture. Lastly, in the final section I explain how identity is social constructed and what that means for representation.

LOVE & War

<h1 style="text-align:center"><u>Chapter Three: "No Easy Answers": Methodologies</u></h1>

Introduction

In the first section of this chapter I explain how I gained entry in the Leave Out ViolencE organization. Then in Design and Process I lay out with detail the procedures undertaken to carry out this three part study based on three different approaches to fieldwork. In Fieldwork 1 I detail how the documents were acquired and what type of documents they are. As well, I explain in detail how they are analyzed. In Fieldwork 2 I explain the procedures undertaken to acquire ethics approval. I also set out the theoretical background to this section of qualitative study involving interviews with adults working with LOVE. Lastly, in Fieldwork 3 I explain the type of analyses used to access youth voice.

Gaining Entry

I had learned of the organization from a friend. I contacted LOVE and after an interview with one of their program coordinators, I decided that a close study of LOVE would make for an important contribution to the work being accomplished in the areas of youth empowerment. I wrote a proposal addressed to the coordinator and the Executive Director of the Montreal LOVE office requesting entry into the organization with the intention of studying their policies on youth. Specifically, I had wanted to analyze the language of LOVE's policies on youth in relation to violence. After a short waiting period, I heard back from the now late Executive Director, Olivier Tsai. He informed me that LOVE did not have fixed policies but rather worked with compassion and an understanding that the organization's primary objective is to help youth overcome violence. He invited me to study the organization through what documents it did have to share. Later, he agreed to my conducting interviews with adult members of LOVE's Montreal community. This initial conversation with Olivier Tsai was the beginning of a very like-minded and inspiring alliance. My goal became to study LOVE for its work with youth. By way of contributing to the organization, it was agreed that I will give a copy of my thesis to the organization that they might use its findings to help secure funding.

Since my research does not involve direct contact with youth members, Olivier invited me to study LOVE *in-situ*. Since summer is LOVE's quiet time, I was given an office of my own. I worked on site once a week for four and a half months during the summer of 2012.

LOVE & War

Design and Process

The design behind this three part fieldwork study is inspired by readings in the area of cognitive psychology. "What we think affects how we feel and act; what we do affects how we think and feel; how we feel affects what we think and do" (*Cognitive Therapy*, n.d., n.p.). Cognitive therapy is often used to treat depression. "The treatment is based on the principle that maladaptive behavior (ineffective, self-defeating behavior) is triggered by inappropriate or irrational thinking patterns" (*Cognitive Therapy*, n.d., n.p.). Simply explained here, in this type of therapy it is said that distorted understandings of the world and the self come from irrational thoughts. If you change this pattern, if you cognitively disrupt the flow of information along this triangle, you can retrain yourself to live rationally, to live more meaningfully (*Cognitive Therapy*, n.d., n.p.). I believe youth in empowerment programs are doing just that. As stated elsewhere in this thesis, LOVE is not a place of therapy. It is, however, therapeutic. LOVE youth are writing, creating images and engaging in critical dialogue in order to disrupt the negative effects violence has had in their lives and in the world around them. In so doing, they are empowering themselves. They are overcoming the irrationality, the hostility, the marginalization they suffer from. They are transgressing. They are threatening "the social order" (hooks, 1994, p. 24) in order to fight the oppressions they suffer. I cite this triangle from cognitive therapy because the three parts of this study are fundamentally linked to one another, LOVE could not exist otherwise. Each piece of this three part fieldwork study is in support of one another. Perhaps it seems amiss to situate a theoretical construct that implies and is intended to be disrupted then refuse to alter its structure. But, as Hall (1992) suggests, tension is crucial for making progress.

I begin my three part fieldwork study in setting up the organization by describing LOVE and by analyzing its documents in Fieldwork 1. This is where I learned of LOVE's momentum. I unpack LOVE's methodologies to gain perspective on just how effective their teachings are in areas like critical thinking. By looking at the details of how this grassroots organization is empowering youth one can begin to empathize with the violence prevention movement in relation to youth. To support this analysis and my findings, I turn towards the key actors who make the organization work. Through qualitative analysis of interviews with adult members of the Montreal LOVE community, in Fieldwork 2, I identify the philanthropic nature and compassion that makes this organization so successful. To close the triangle, in the section Fieldwork 3, I bring to the table

LOVE & War

the key focus and reason for this important study in youth empowerment—youth themselves. In this study youth do not have a direct voice, as would be made possible in a participatory research approach. Because of this, the inclusion of their voice through a careful interpretation of various texts and images is done in order to ensure a full cycle of understanding with regards to the Leave Out ViolencE organization and the work it does with youth. My analysis is by way of offering youth a strong presence within the conversation.

The war on youth affects how youth think, how they feel, how they behave-this war has very real and damaging cognitive effects on youth. The war is irrational at best. The social structuring, the hegemonic forces behind its logic with its antiquated systems of thinking and processes of normalization are greatly in need of disruption. This war with its hegemonic pattern of behaviour works as a 'public pedagogue' that begs restructuring. Through strong and capable youth voice, they are achieving this. The tension youth place on the dominant systems at work marginalizing them, is how they are making progress towards changing the paradigms of oppression against them. As youth empower themselves in becoming reflexive, in thinking critically and in acting with political mindfulness in such movements as violence prevention, they are effectively altering their previous understandings of the world and of themselves and are transgressing irrationality and oppression.

Fieldwork 1

In Chapter Four, I carefully detail my findings on the organization from the information I have gathered through my *in-situ* research, as well as from information available in the public domain. While *in-situ*, I was invited to gather as much documentation as possible, which included internal memos, documents concerning program requirements, lesson plans for workshops, staff training manuals, grant applications, metrics study questionnaires and summary, accolades, old newspaper stories about LOVE and related topics, copies of LOVE's own newspaper, *ONE L.O.V.E.*, and two books of youth work published under the organization. Most of the documents, such as *Tout les ateliers P.A.M*, *Leadership 2 - Broadcast Media Program. Leave Out Violence (LOVE Québec) Proposal to the Canadian Women's Foundation for 2008 Violence Prevention Grants*, *Mandatory Program Requirements*, *LOVE: Train the trainer manual*, *Visible change: LOVE Québec: LOVE annual report 2011/2012*, and the metrics study executive summary, I received through email from LOVE's Montreal staff. The newspaper articles concerning the story

LOVE & War

of Daniel E. Rudberg, metrics questionnaires, some of the accolades, most of the copies of *ONE L.O.V.E.* and *Imagine LOVE*, and the two books edited by Brenda Zosky Proulx were collected with permission from Executive Director, Olivier Tsai in the Montreal office. All remaining documents and information noted in relation to describing LOVE and document analysis came from the Internet or from personal conversations (all of which are cited as such). I chose to reconstruct LOVE in order to create a portrait of the organization for those who are unfamiliar with it or unaware of its programs. I sought an analysis which would tie the organization with empowerment theory, as is its objective.

It became evident while conducting my research that writing a short historical context would give deeper meaning to what the Leave Out ViolencE program stands for. This is done in order to give insight to the profound significance and connectedness behind LOVE. After which I provide direct information such as: the organization's methods; its many locations and the timelines to each office opening; all major programs offered and, when available, related lesson plans; recruitment processes and requirements for entry into LOVE's programs; LOVE's protocol in terms of staff and youth behaviour; information on exhibits of youth generated media; different types of exposure; metrics study summary findings; the many awards and recognitions received in relation to the organization and its members. This rich sampling of documents and their analysis allows for a detailed recreation of the organization. This facilitates insight into LOVE's preliminary structures of operation. Not to mention, it shares the successful model for the potential of growing the violence prevention movement.

Fieldwork 2

Qualitative interviews were carried out as a means to gain insight into the human condition, the lived experiences of LOVE members (Mitchell, 2008). This process began through first gaining support from the Executive Director of LOVE's Montreal office, Olivier Tsai. Then, I made an application for ethics approval for human subject research from McGill University's Research Ethics Board-II. With this application was included the Interview Consent Form (see Appendix A), the Recruitment Announcement (see Appendix B), and Draft Interview Guide (see Appendix C). I was granted my Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans on October 15, 2012.

LOVE & War

   I conducted qualitative interviews in order to study LOVE's preliminary structures, the programs, the workshops, and so on. I believe the people at LOVE are the organization's foundational structure—LOVE members are the central nervous system of this grassroots organization. We gain perspective interpreting through qualitative analysis the rich textures of lived experiences as told by adult LOVE members. This type of analysis permits "multifaceted research perspectives" (Moser, 2000, p. 4). What can be derived from multiple perspectives and interpretations can serve well to inform research and support the development of knowledge (Zhang & Wildermuth, 2009) by bringing a wealth of possible viewpoints and by inviting other interpretations.

   Qualitative interviews and analysis "allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner" Zhang & Wildermuth, 2009, p. 1). From this, we are able to "explore meaning underlying physical messages" (Zhang & Wildermuth, 2009, p. 1-2) revealed through narratives and metaphors. Eloquently so, metaphors reveal the structure behind thought, behind expression (Moser, 2000). These metaphors contain significant information about the social, the cultural, the temporal, the context (Moser, 2000). "Metaphors are context-sensitive and reflect social and cultural processes of understanding and self-definition" (Moser, 2000, p. 5-6).

   Taking example from the body of works I've visited for this thesis, I see qualitative analysis as the means to deconstruct meaning. So vitally important to this study, this process "acknowledges that language is not neutral, and posits that the way an issue is discussed has real effects" (Faucher, 2009, p. 440). This statement serves a double point: first, it concerns the exchange where youth and violence intersect with society and how interpretation by the wider social sphere can and does affect outcome. Secondly, it is necessary that we listen to and learn from the people who directly support youth in their empowerment.

   I believe that in quantitative research, very effective and important for issues that rely on measurement, absolutes are important. However, in this case study of an organization which deals with the particular phenomena of youth violence, qualitative analysis is more suited. It supports the idea that "writing is theory" (Knowles & Cole, 2007). Writing's reflexive nature invites inferences (Zhang & Wildermuth, 2009) and what Stuart Hall (1992) calls the "arbitrary closure" (p. 278). Inferences leave knowledge open as it means to invite 'positionalities' (Hall, 1992). This secures endless possibilities in knowledge creation. As well, it puts pressure on "traditional

structures and expectations of the academy" (Mitchell, 2008). It should be said that the reliability of quantitative analysis has proven quite effective when assessing the treatment of youth in areas like print media (see Faucher's, 2009, "Fear and loathing in the news: A qualitative analysis of Canadian print news coverage of youthful offending in the twentieth century"). However, qualitative analysis permits the researcher to focus in on spontaneously emerging categories and themes by immersing their self into the transcripts; a greatly enriching process for both the possibility of outcomes and the researcher (Zhang & Wildermuth, 2009).

Process of recruiting interview participants. With the help of Olivier Tsai and the office secretary, a recruitment announcement (See Appendix A) was sent out to possible participants via email. For reasons of ethical integrity, I remained blind to the list but was told that it was sent to more than 28 individuals. An announcement, identical the one sent out by email, was placed on the bulletin board near the main entrance of the Montreal LOVE office. In total, the recruitment announcement generated four respondents. Each interview was conducted individually over a five month period. Of which, three interviews were audio recorded on to my personal laptop and one conducted over the telephone from which notes were taken. Once the interviews were completed, I set out to transcribe the recorded material using a coding system based off the work of Gail Jefferson (2004). Jefferson's (2004) work allows for emphasis through recognizing what might be revealed in the nuances of the transcript, "that one cannot know what one will find until one finds it" (p. 15). The basis of this style of coding, in my opinion, is to document actual colloquialism and timing so that I may assess the speaker's emotional state. Unfortunately, the notes taken during the telephone interview did not follow this coding system. When I later read the material with the intention of developing a manuscript, the data no longer made sense. That interview is not included in the analysis. All transcribed dialogue cited in this thesis has been modified to allow for reading fluidity, albeit at times, I have chosen to include the raw transcript data for effect.

Participants. All participation for the interviews was on a volunteer basis. The participants were given an option of being anonymous, using a pseudonym or using their real names. Throughout the sharing of the data below, I refer to the participants by their first name as a means to keep with the relaxed, casual tone of the actual interviews themselves. Each participant was given a copy of the relevant questions prior to the interview. In the background section, I arrange each interviewee by name and title, and describe how they became involved with the organization.

LOVE & War

A total of four interviews were conducted. Each one lasted approximately one hour. Each interview was held at a location chosen by the participant. Dave asked to meet at a Java-U coffee shop on De Maisonneuve Boulevard. Dan wanted to meet in the food court at Alexis Nihon plaza. Olivier and I meet in the foyer at LOVE's office in the old port. The fourth interview was held over the phone. As mentioned above, it is not included in the analysis as the notes taken during the interview were unclear, and therefore unfit for process and use. Each interview went smoothly and with little distraction from either the environment we were in or the questions asked.

      Developing the questions: Categories. Initially, four categories where set up from which to work: Background; Role, Responsibilities and Specificities; General Sense of LOVE; What Next? These thematic groups were designed to provide insight on the people behind LOVE. The questions in each category were designed to facilitate conversation in a relaxed manner. The focus on these categories has changed. The information revealed in the interviews revealed more meaningful themes.

      Rather than taking on the challenge of analyzing the more than 80 themes apparent in the three interviews, I focus on six key concepts. These concepts are on notions of belonging, visibility, education, youth, violence and cycle of violence (witness, perpetrator, victim). The concepts emerged from different metaphors used to narrativize participants' stories. Belonging and visibility stood out as being compassionate and important. For 'education' I conducted a careful search through each of the transcribed manuscripts and backed up my findings using the internal search engine for Apple's TextEdit word processor program to find what I deemed as the 5 most relevant words, including possible variations: educate (-ing, -ed, -ion, -es); learn (-ing, -ed, -t); teach (-ing, -er, -able); school; curriculum. I applied the same methodology to the remaining categories: youth, violence, cycle of violence (witness, perpetrator, victim). For the category 'youth', the words and their derivatives include: youth; age (teenage); adolescent (-ts; -ces); hood (representing a time frame and a place); young; person; people; juvenile; minor; delinquent. For the category 'violence', the words coded for include: violent; violence; trouble; suicide; drugs; alcohol; harm; cutting; gang. For the category 'cycle of violence' (witness, perpetrator, victim) I sought to use only these specific words.

LOVE & War

Fieldwork 3

To gain perspective on youth identity beyond negative stereotypes and ominous tropes circulating in wider society, I decided to study the productions and writings available in media generated by youth at LOVE using close reading strategies. I set out to do this by applying the types of interpretive skills that I had first learned to apply to literature (Atwood, 1972; Frye, Staines & O'Grady, 2003). To better understand the world youth inhabit I apply a careful interpretation of chosen texts. I have chosen to apply a literary reading drawing on the strengths, the emotions and the creativeness evident in each work. I attempted to select one piece of work per issue of *ONE L.O.V.E.* I had collected, however the volume of work collected was extensive. I had amassed 29 issues. Each issue contains varying numbers of written work; these include poetry, rants, reports, specials, columns, and so on. As well, each issues releases visual arts, most notably photography, although there are the occasional drawings or sketches. See below for more details on the newspaper itself. I chose works by age being sure to focus mostly on youth contributors under 18 years-old, difficulty of subject matter and intensity of expression. I purposely chose text that reflected some of my own experiences of alienation and some of the struggles I faced when entering the adult world such as is evident in "St. Bullshit College" (Andrew, 2006). This treatment of youth writing is a demonstration of respect for their courage, honesty and creativity. All materials cited here are from LOVE youth and are available in the public domain.

In the beginning of my analysis, I started to create a chart from which to explore the different themes present in the youth's writings and images. I began with the very first issue of LOVE's newspaper, *ONE L.O.V.E.*. After nearly charting two complete issues, I abandoned the process. The charts remain incomplete. They are not reproduced here, in part because of how complicated they became due to topics, subtopics, multi-themed topics and related topics. I had intended on reproducing them here by way of indicating the volume of work reproduced in each paper and to indicate some of the more general themes of youth writings and photography. However, each release of *ONE L.O.V.E.* shows very different styles of layout and input. Some issues have more than 120 pieces of writing on about 30 pages, whereas others have maybe 40 pieces of written work. The inconsistent formatting of *ONE L.O.V.E.* made a quantitate approach too demanding for the time available for this study. I also found that reading much of the writings available in *ONE L.O.V.E.* was emotionally crippling. I was more than four issues in before I realized that I had

LOVE & War

stopped taking notes in favour of sinking deeper into the stories that unfolded on each page. As a reflexive researcher, I feel compelled to say that the act of committing to read each piece of writing was both depressing and cathartic. I was and still am humbled by the honesty and courage of these youth writers. Seeing moments of my own life reflected back to me in someone else's words was truly difficult. These pages of writings are not my mirror, but they certainly portrayed a dark world I know well. It was and is not emotionally possible for me to reread some of the work I came across in order to finish the charts. I decided to stop and to recognize that the darkness and the hope for change found in the pages of *ONE L.O.V.E.* gives me all the more reason to pursue this project on youth empowerment. While initially charting the different themes, it became apparent that certain motifs of violence stood out. These include: sexual abuse, sexual assault, molestation, rape; self-mutilation, self-harm, cutting, self-loathing; youth culture in graffiti, music, consumership, art; authority in the home, in gang life, between peers, in society; belonging in a family, in a community, in school. I chose to focus on some of these major themes of violence because they found the most voice in the newspapers. The works cited in this study were chosen by memory. When I had nearly finished reading all the issues made available to me by the Montreal LOVE office and found elsewhere, I selected the works that had committed themselves to my memory.

By way of demonstrating that youth voice affectively reaches audiences beyond those directly linked to the organization, the work cited here comes from the public domain. I was able to procure most of LOVE's newspapers, both in English and in French, dating back to its introductory print in December of 1997. I rely heavily on the youth voice from these newspapers and two books: *LOVE works!: Photojournalism by the Leave Out Violence teens* (1998) and *The courage to change: A teen survival guide* (2001).

In the qualitative analysis of youth voice in media generated by youth at the organization, I abandon some of the more conventional methods of data coding and delivery in order to offer a more raw interpretation. I rely on skills learned during my undergraduate degree to access content and discuss literature as a form of study of human nature. Also, through an analysis based on the images from the photovoice work, I assess youth voice in their visual arts-based documentation of violence.

In performing a qualitative analysis of both literature and photovoice, I was hoping to "provide a rich description of the social reality" (Zhang & Wildemuth, p.11) of the youth who have

skillfully and often painstakingly shared their ideas, their lives and their experiences with the world. At the same time, I aimed to represent youth as they themselves intended, with seriousness, with purpose, with the intension of changing the world they inhabit (Hoeschmann & Low, 2008). It was my intention to treat youth with care and dignity, with sincerity and respect. In the analysis of youth voice, I have included the age of each of the writers cited (when available).

Summary of Chapter Three

In the above chapter we see how I learned of and gained entry into the Leave Out ViolencE organization. Following this, I lay out the design and logic behind triangulating the three different parts of this fieldwork study using a cognitive therapy model of mental and emotional retraining. Then I explain the process behind each part of this study. For example, in Fieldwork 1, unpacking the organization's methodologies yields perspective on the effectiveness of their programs. I then establish my reasoning for using qualitative analysis on interviews with key actors in Fieldwork 2. I explain that applying a qualitative approach to the interview transcripts facilitates a deeper appreciation for the philanthropic nature of the adults working in the LOVE community. Qualitative analysis allows for the emergence of themes which can then be rendered into important data about the subject. Lastly, in Fieldwork 3 I set out to establish the close reading applied to youth voice. In order to treat youth voice with respect, being that the material cited is second hand, I apply a qualitative literary explication so as to draw on the strengths, the emotions and the creativeness of these youth writers. This method of carefully interpreting the texts is applied to better inhabit the world of the writer. Through further analysis based on photovoice, I access youth voice in their visual arts-based documentation of their lives, their communities and of their perceptions of violence. I explain that these approaches to youth voice provide deeper meaning and understanding while illustrating their social reality and their lived experiences.

LOVE & War

Chapter Four: "I Was Never Taught How To L.O.V.E.": LOVE

Introduction

In the following chapter, I begin by introducing the tragedy that sparked the seeds for LOVE. Because I learned so much about the organization as I was doing my fieldwork, it seems particularly appropriate to place it in this chapter. In my description I introduce the concept of perpetrator as victim. Following this are details as to what further inspired the creation of the organization and the people behind it. I then go into the findings from the 3 fieldwork components. In Fieldwork 1, I detail the beginnings of the organization, list its different locations, introduce the different programs, explain LOVE's recruitment processes for acquiring youth, the requirements needed for entry into the programs and explain LOVE's protocol. From this point, I detail the different programs and offer analysis, where applicable, of their workshops. Lastly in this section is additional information, details from a metric study, information on accolades conferred in relation to LOVE, and lastly I provide information on LOVE's newspaper, *ONE L.O.V.E.*.

In the second section, Fieldwork 2, I set up the rationale for the interviews, the method of interview analysis, the logic behind the interview study, I detail participants' backgrounds and release my findings from the interviews in six principle themes that emerged from the transcripts.

In the third and final section of this study, Fieldwork 3, I analyze youth voice through qualitative and literary explication of some of the writings and photography achieved at the Leave Out ViolencE organization.

Fieldwork 1: The Backstory: Tragedy

The story of LOVE begins in tragedy. Imagine: it's Saturday evening, 1972. It is early fall. It's cool outside. You are driving downtown heading towards dinner with your spouse and a few friends who have all packed into the car with the intention of a good meal in good company. Then, on a small residential street in the McGill ghetto, you spot a long haired, barefooted youth attempting to snatch an older woman's purse. You quickly park the car. With a few of your companions in tow, you rush to help. By the time you get to the scene, the woman has moved on, purse in hand, but the youth is still there. Realizing that he is being pursued, he flees. A chase begins. In a back alley, the youth, "hippie" (*Allo Police*, 1972), is cornered. You stay to keep watch over him, while your companions go for the police.

LOVE & War

 The companions return with the police to find the youth huddled in a corner. He seems to be in some kind of induced state (Dubois, 1972). He has a three inch switch blade in his hand. It is covered in blood. Not far away lay the cold, lifeless body of the one who stayed behind to guard the youth. His name is Dan E. Rudberg. This is the story of why LOVE was started.

 Dan E. Rudberg, hero, stabbed (Siegler, 1972). Dead at the young age of 38 (*Gazette*, 1972), Dan left behind three children and his wife, Twinkle. It is a gripping, sad story. It is a story that sticks to the walls of the heart, and a great misfortune. This tragedy struck the community hard.

 In a personal letter addressed to Mrs. Rudberg from Hilda Book, the owner of the nearly-snatched purse, she writes, "…I realized that this cowardly act and my misfortune were connected… your husband will be remembered as a brave and gallant gentleman, and a person whom the community can ill afford to lose" (H. Book, personal communication, October 5, 1972).

 The Corporation of Engineers of Québec offered an education grant in Rudberg's name (H. J. M. Baudot, personal communication, December 7, 1972). In an article in *La Presse*, Dan Rudberg is offered a hero's badge. The writer declares that we live in a society infested by delinquents in which most people avoid being implicated in any direct way. Our society is preyed upon by germs of moral destruction that attack at the cellular level, the family, in which parents shine in their complete absence or by indifference in the development and education of their own children:

> une société infestée par de tels délinquants, une société dans laquelle la plupart des gens évitent d'être impliqués aussi longtemps qu'ils ne sont pas touchés directement[…]. Notre société set en proie aux germes de la destruction morale qui attaquent sa cellule meme, la famille, dans laquelle les parents brilliant par l'absence totale ou par l'indifférence dans la formation et l'éducation civique de leurs enfants. (Siegler, 1972)

The author states that delinquent youth are the germs that are destroying the moral fiber of family values; parents turn a blind eye if the issues at hand have no direct effect. The article demands that youth be taught that society does not belong to them and that they must respect moral rule.

 At Rudberg's funeral, 15 police motorcycles accompanied the cortège as a demonstration in honour of a civilian who gave his life in an attempt to help a fellow citizen in need (*Montreal Star*, 1972); Dan E. Rudberg who gave his life while helping a police force that was already heavily burdened (Kowch, 1972). It is fair to surmise that the victim in this story of violence died well

before his time and that each of his beloved family members are themselves victims of this heinous act of senseless violence.

Thus far, our perpetrator is portrayed much as he is represented in the media coverage at that time. He is of little priority save for this role as the perp and as a testament to our 'decaying society'. The mention of this murderer is curt, to say the least. It would seem from the articles concerning Rudberg's story, that there is no need to critique the perp's role, his actions, his place in society. He is, quintessentially, guilty.

The Other Victim

In 1974, Kurt Finney, the perpetrator, is declared "unfit to stand trial" (Nebbs, 1974). He is found not guilty in the slaying of Dan E. Rudberg (*Gazette*, 1974). I am only just introducing Kurt Finney as a kind of stylistic choice. Up to this point, he is presented in this paper, as stated above, similarly to the way print news media treated him at the time of Rudberg's death—as nothing more than a supporting character in a tragic story. In spite of this, Finney's own story is complex and should not be left behind as a back-story.

Kurt Finney is diagnosed as being in "a pronounced psychotic state with delusionary elements" (*Gazette*, 1974). He is understood to be "mentally retarded from childhood" and a heavy user of LSD (*Gazette*, 1974). In the two weeks preceding his hearing, Finney tries to commit suicide twice (Nebbs, 1974). He is eventually deported (*Gazette*, 1974).

In 1972, Kurt Finney is only fourteen years old. He is a minor and a runaway from small town, Maryland, USA, who suffers from mental illness (*Montreal Star*, 1972b). As his troubling story becomes unraveled, we learn that this lost youth, member of a gang of runaways from all over the continent, is living as a squatter and in squalor in St-Adele, Québec; as near he could be to the big city (*Montreal Star*, 1972). He and the other forsaken youth in his gang are living a vagrant life style on whatever they can acquire through petty thievery. All the while, Finney is desperately seeking refuge from his own mental state through the use of narcotics. It is understood that his act of violence was inspired by something he had watched on television (Katz, 1999).

Finney is a disenfranchised youth marginalized by wider society. He is left wanting by a medical system which cannot help him nor support his single mother who tried but who could not care for him.

LOVE & War

Finney himself is a victim. He is a victim of society. He is a victim of circumstances and poor judgements. As Twinkle Rudberg sees him—he is a victim of violence (Katz, 1999).

Inspiration

In 1992, a grieving 13-year-old, Virginie Larivière, began a campaign against violence on television after her younger sister was raped and murdered (Katz, 1999). Larivière believes that violence on television played a role in the tragedy of her sister's death. Larivière's petition calls for the Canadian government to reduce the amount of gratuitous violence on television. Before being handed to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, the campaign received more than 1.3 million signatures (Denis, 2001). On the petition was Twinkle Rudberg's signature. Inspired by Larivière's act of bravery, Twinkle, with the help and expertise of colleagues and friends, founded Leave Out ViolencE (*LOVE - Leave Out Violence*, n.d.).

Colleagues

Twinkle Rudberg founded LOVE in 1992 with the help of colleagues and friends. The list of colleagues goes: Clifton Ruggles, special education teacher working in the public sector; Brenda Zosky Proulx, child's rights advocate working as an instructor in the journalism department at Concordia University; Stanley Chase, photography teacher at Dawson College (Chase, 2008).

Leave Out ViolencE the Organization: "I Am Hope"

Leave out violencE is a grassroots, community-based, non-profit organization dedicated to helping marginalized and disenfranchised, at-risk youth from the ages of 11 to 20. The organization helps youth through directly addressing the negative effects of violence in their lives and in their communities. Violence, as understood by LOVE, refers to drug and alcohol abuse, and indirect or premeditated harm against one's self and/or others. Through the use of multi-media, LOVE's violence prevention programs help youth "reject violence" (*About LOVE*, n.d.). LOVE works with youth regardless of the type of violence in their lives (Leave Out ViolencE, 2008a) and regardless of the youth's position in relation to violence, be they witness, victim or perpetrator.

LOVE uses peer-to-peer or "youth-driven" (*About LOVE*, n.d.), youth created multi-media to advocate a message of non-violence. "LOVE youth reach out into their own communities to share their stories, knowledge, learning, and anti-violence philosophies" (Leave Out Violence, 2008a).

LOVE & War

Beginning. As mentioned above, LOVE began in 1992. It took shape slowly. The nascent LOVE, then known as "LOVE Speaker's Bureau, 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" (Chase, 2008, p. 2). Attacking the billion dollar entertainment industry which distributes and shows gratuitous violence yielded little success. After a short period as simply a place for gathering like-minded individuals, the LOVE founders chose to empower youth with the ability to transgress the ill effects of violence. The LOVE program was first located in the basement of Dawson College in Montreal, Québec (Chase, 2008; Chase, personal communication, June 22, 2012). In time, LOVE developed into a photojournalism project where "engaging in photography and writing, the participants explore and document the issues surrounding violence in their lives and in their community" (Chase, 2008, n.p.). In his dissertation, Stanley Chase details how the founders of LOVE were introduced, and how their various works and passions lead them to begin the LOVE photojournalism project, what would later become LOVE's Media Art Program (MAP), the beginner program.

The photojournalism project was launched in January of 1995 (Chase, 2008). Over the course of twenty years, the multiple programs now offered at LOVE have grown in complexity, effectiveness and reach, all of which will be expanded upon later in this thesis.

Locations. LOVE began in Montreal, Québec in 1992, then in Toronto, Ontario in 1996, Vancouver, British Columbia and Halifax, Nova Scotia in 2000, New York city, USA in 2005, Eliat, Israel in 2008 and Uganda in 2011 (*LOVE - Leave Out Violence*, n.d.). Its newest office is in Jaffa, Israel. Beginning in 2011, Jaffa is a three-year pilot project helping the Arab Jewish Community Center (AJCC) unite youth from Christian, Muslim and Jewish backgrounds in an effort to spread a message of non-violence. Prior to the untimely death of LOVE's Montreal office Executive Director, Olivier Tsai, he had been working with a colleague to open a LOVE office in Jamaica (O. Tsai, personal communication, August 24, 2012).

Themes of programs. The key objective behind LOVE's programs is youth empowerment, although they offer a great deal more. The programs are developed to help youth develop self-esteem and learn life skills

> that are essential to a productive life [such as] problem solving, conflict resolution,
> interpersonal skills, situational perception, anger control, moral reasoning, stress

LOVE & War

management, empathy, critical thinking, accountable talk, cooperative and presentation

skills. To ultimately better understand the root causes and possible solutions to youth

violence. (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b, n.p.)

Furthermore, LOVE focuses on creating a safe environment for youth. LOVE helps give youth a voice as a means to heal from and prevent violence — LOVE helps youth to empower themselves. LOVE also trains a youth force who volunteer to go out into the community to share their experiences and messages of non-violence.

LOVE's brand, its pride, is on being a different kind of community program (Olivier, Interview, January 25, 2013). It does not provide direct counselling or crisis intervention. Instead, LOVE offers an open door and safe space for youth to be themselves, a key dimension for youth empowerment (Jennings et al., 2006). It is effective. Its unique style and success, resides in its "youth-to-youth, media-production-driven" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b, n.p.) educational programs. Peer driven mentorship is said to provide meaningful roles for the youth (Jennings et al., 2006) and an opportunity to develop a social identity (Zimmerman, Stewart, Morrel-Samuels, Franzen, & Reischl, 2010). Their model works. They offer an attractive and exciting program wherein marginalized, at-risk youth attracted to "the process of documenting youth culture using various media, [take] their work out into the community where they can help others reject violence as they themselves have done" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b, n.p.). LOVE applies a four-step media education model based in inquiry: "awareness, analysis, reflection, action" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b, n.p.). This four-step process is evident in their workshops, which will be explored below.

Over time, LOVE youth develop their voice while becoming adept at different mediums of communication: journalistic style of reporting, photography, audio recording and video production. These tools help youth develop skills to access information, deconstruct and analyze messages and codify content based on principles of non-violence all while empowering themselves.

LOVE operates four main programs (numbered here for easy categorization): 1) Media Arts Program (MAP); 2) Leadership Training; 3) School and Community Violence Prevention Outreach Program; 4) In-School Violence Prevention Committee (*LOVE - Leave Out Violence*, n.d.). Each of the programs are described in detail and discussed briefly, with more focus on MAP

LOVE & War

and Leadership Training. The amount of information generated here is based upon the available material.

LOVE recruitment and requirements. Recruitment of new youth members into the program is done in a variety of ways. Youth learn about LOVE by word of mouth from peers and at outreaches where LOVE youth leaders share their messages of non-violence. Note that outreaches for the explicit purpose of recruiting are not done. Should a youth find himself or herself interested in the program while at an outreach, he or she is required to follow a standardized admittance process. This entails a referral from a staff member at their school and an interview with LOVE staff. Generally, youth are referred to LOVE by a school guidance counselor, spiritual animator, principal or teacher (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008c), to a maximum of 3 students per school (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b). Youth can be referred to LOVE by social workers, guardians or parents. In all cases, youth participation must be 100% voluntary on their part. Membership at LOVE cannot be a part of fulfilling other requirements as in community service (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b).

Diversity is noted as imperative to the success of the program. Having youth from different class, gender and radicalized backgrounds allows for a complex dynamic of people who come from a variety of unique lived experiences and, therefore, perspectives (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b). Racial and cultural diversity is a requirement at "all levels of programming and staffing" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b). Youth members may have experienced violence as victims, witnesses or perpetrators. They may feel burdened by the effects of violence or be unencumbered or even unaware of the violence they are experiencing (O. Tsai, personal communication, August 24, 2012). Youth may be driven by a desire to enhance their creative skills or be leaders at heart. They may be experiencing difficulties at school or at home, or be 'falling through the cracks' and in need of support. They may be socially ambitious or in need of self-discovery. More often though, the youth who find themselves in MAP are in some way vulnerable; they are often disenfranchised and marginalized by wider society. Regardless of their reasons for entering LOVE, they must all want to make "the world a better place by learning to use various media as instruments of change" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b, n.p.).

LOVE has specific requirements concerning how the program operates and who sees entry into the program. LOVE youth must be impacted by violence. At least 75% of LOVE youth must be enrolled in school. The remaining are to be connected with resources, be they educational or

LOVE & War

employment related; the exact number of youth in the latter is determined by the regional executive director. LOVE requires each youth to have a trustee or caretaker, someone with whom they can communicate concerning the individual youth. Each youth member together with their guardian must sign a waiver relinquishing LOVE and its staff of any happenings while participating in the LOVE program. As well, they must sign a media release form giving LOVE the right to use the youth's creative property. However, youth can refuse the latter. It is simply a different form to be signed.

LOVE makes an effort to have an equal number of male and female youth in each group. Each session must see a large number of younger youths aged 13, 14 or 15 years old. Staff members are required to keep an updated file on all youth members. Attendance is taken at each workshop (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b).

An interview is requested with all potential LOVE youth. This procedure is to make sure that LOVE and the youth are well fitted to each other (Dan, Interview, February, 23, 2013). During this time, youth's intention to participate on a voluntary basis is confirmed. It has happened that social workers and other adult influences have been presumptuous concerning the youth's desire to participate in the program. The interview is more or less a formality (Dan, Interview, February 23, 2013). Nonetheless, it can be a legitimizing experience for interested youth. Being evaluated by a panel of people gives the program an air of certainty. "*It really wasn't what I expected. All I knew is that it was a photography program so I had no [former] understanding of what they, [LOVE], would be and right away the fact that there was an interview, I could tell there was a bit more to it*" (Dan, Interview, February, 23, 2013). During the interview, there is no list or script of questions. The interview is a process that allows staff to get a sense of who the youth is while giving all an opportunity to see whether or not the program is a good match for the youth and vice versa (Dan, Interview, 2013; Olivier, Interview, January 25, 2013).

LOVE protocol. LOVE has a set protocol regarding youth's behaviour. For instance, a youth who is exhibiting signs of inebriation or being under the influence of narcotics, or who might be "very disruptive" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b), is discreetly asked to leave that session but is invited back. LOVE is a non-punitive community (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b). A facilitator will intervene if a youth member becomes abusive while in session, shows signs of suicidal

behaviour or acts disrespectful and threatens the safety of the space. Staff is not permitted to give out personal contact information as a means to protect the staff member and the youth.

Program 1: Media Arts Program. "Through the lens of a camera, the written word and their voices, these young people articulate the impact of violence on their lives and explore positive alternatives" (*LOVE - Leave Out Violence*, n.d., n.p.). The basic information provided here is the model followed within most LOVE offices, however some of the details given here are specific to the Montreal office. All LOVE youth begin by going through Media Arts Program (MAP). Youth from the ages of 13-18 are accepted into the program. On occasion, there have been exceptions made for younger participants. MAP runs for a minimum of 24 weeks. It follows the North American school calendar in having two sessions: one starting in the fall and one starting after a winter break. The program takes in an average of 30 youth in September. However, the number often dwindles to approximately half by *January* (M. Sambe, personal communication, February 16, 2012). The program demands a heavy commitment from its youth members. It is held two evenings per week, each session lasting two hours. Groups meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays. There are two facilitators: a social worker and a media specialist. The Montreal program runs bilingually (M. Sambe, personal communication, February 16, 2012).

This program, formerly known as The Photojournalism Program, is heavily based in writing, photography and discussion. It is being expanded to include other media, such as digital storytelling and video production (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b). It was that all youth entering MAP were given press badges and cameras (O. Tsai, personal communication, August 24, 2012), but I am uncertain if this still applies. MAP is the initial program wherein all LOVE youth members begin their journey towards violence prevention. At the end of the program some of the works created by LOVE's youth are published in LOVE's newspaper: *ONE L.O.V.E.* (its French equivalent, *Imagine LOVE*). More information on the newspapers is given below.

Each year end, from 1995 until 2012, articles, poetry and photography were collected from each LOVE office (and in some years this included works created in schools), and amalgamated and published in a newspaper titled: *ONE L.O.V.E.*. In 2013, in an effort to become more cost effective, each region became responsible for its own publication and release (O. Tsai, personal communication, August 24, 2012). An interesting fact: in a time of increasing digital presence and production, LOVE youth, consulted in a discussion about how to reduce costs, voted against a

proposal to cancel the newspaper altogether. This moment in power sharing helped both the individual member grow by having voice as it helped the organization meet the needs and wants of those they work for; "critical youth empowerment integrates opportunities and results in positive change at both individual and community levels" (Jennings et al., 2006, p. 49). The youth consulted on this matter see the act of publishing as highly legitimizing. They argue that being in print brings credibility and integrity to the authors (O. Tsai, personal communication, August 24, 2012).

At the end of each year, a selection of work generated locally is placed on exhibit in art galleries, institutional foyers and other locations. This time of visibility is crucial for succeeding empowerment. For the once marginalized youth who is actively overcoming previous social constraints, it bridges what would have remained the untouchable adult world with a now attainable one.

MAP workshops overview. The following is an overview of LOVE's MAP workshops. The information herein is based on the documentation I received from staff at LOVE's Montreal office. To be noted, most of the information comes from a document released internally in 2008 titled, Mandatory Programs Requirements. Its intention is to unify the procedures of all offices working under the LOVE brand. It is important to note that I have yet to actually attend a workshop for reasons of ethical integrity and in respect for the privacy of youth participants.

Before the start of each workshop, youth are given something to eat and drink. This routine demonstrates stability and inspires feelings of security. It is understood that the youth are more likely relaxed when their blood sugar is up. All foods have been either donated to LOVE or collected from food banks as a means to keep costs down (O. Tsai, personal communication, July 13, 2012).

At the start of each year, all members new to MAP, be they victim, witness or perpetrator, are asked to recognize the environment of LOVE's office as a safe space. This means that at all times when at LOVE they will find their person respected and in return are asked to respect others. "Such an environment allows participants to share their feelings, take risks, and feel as if they belong to a family-like community" (Jennings et al, 2006, p. 41, citing Heath, 1991). "A welcoming and safe environment is a social space in which young people have freedom to be themselves, express their own creativity, voice their opinions in decision-making processes, try

out new skills and roles, rise to challenges, and have fun in the process" (Jennings et al., 2006, p. 41). These critical youth empowerment attributes are clearly part of LOVE's objectives. During an initial icebreaker session, the youth are asked to democratically choose the rules that they and their peers will observe throughout their time at LOVE. A list is made documenting these rules and signed by all present.

All workshops begin with editorial meetings where youth discuss real issues of violence related to their lives and their communities (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b). Looking at the world with a journalistic perspective is intended to help inspire awareness. Many of the workshops overlap in methods used to access the subject of violence. However, the primary tools used are writing, photography and discussion. For example, 26 different workshops all see some kind of discussion; of those, 11 focus on writing, 11 on photography, 10 use other media such as film and magazines.

An example of a photography workshop would have youth look at thought provoking, even stunning, portrayals of humanity in different stages of hidden existence. For instance, a Nan Goldin (n.d.) photograph of transvestites covering up signs of abuse with make up, or a Larry Clark (1983) image portraying youth in a mixture of elusive sex and drugs use.

A writing workshop will see perhaps a discussion of Tupac Shakur's (n.d.) poem, "Sometime I cry". The group will then transition into writing their own poem of the same title. The youth are encouraged to share and are offered positive feedback, however, the facilitators are asked to focus more on encouraging sharing (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b). Psychiatrist and professor, Dr. Ronald Fieldman states that:

> LOVE's media/journalism programs are key because they bridge the gap between education and therapy. They are the connection between what LOVE does and therapy. Most of these youth like most other people already know what they should do, but they lack the skills to do it. LOVE's media/journalism programs teach essential life skills that they need to succeed which include: Listening, communicating, thinking critically, planning, organizing, talking, reading, writing, understanding current social issues, dealing with frustrations and getting along in a group. Without those skills they are living the equivalent of being punished for not being able to speak a language they have not been taught. That's where [LOVE's] project is therapeutic. (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b, n.p.)

Youth coming through the MAP program are better able to negotiate or even bridge the power gap between the seemingly untouchable adult world of authority and their own.

Continuing on the workshops, a workshop on film, advertisement or print media sees the deconstruction of content for the purpose of analyzing issues like hypersexualization. Afterwards, the groups form debate teams taking on different points of view and explore the possible arguments and logics behind them. Scholar S. Brookfield is quoted in one of LOVE's manuals as saying:

> Critical thinking involve[s] calling into question[] assumptions underlying our customary, habitual ways for 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. (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b, n.p.)

The reproduction of some of the benefits of critical questioning indicates that the people responsible for developing the LOVE curriculum are aware of, and most likely educated in critical thinking theory. Brookfield's thinking is in line with Paulo Freire's concept of conscientization which is a process of becoming aware through reflection and action; the process of coming to a conscientious understanding of one's existence in society and the forces around us which influences our experiences, our actions and our being in the world (Freire, 2009).

MAP workshops in detail. The following is a detailed exploration of process. This section sees a move from a broad overview of the MAP workshops to a short but careful analysis and reproduction of some of the workshop lesson plans.

Seven of the 26 workshops delve clearly into issues of self-discovery, awareness, introspection and reflection in asking questions like: "Pensez-vous que les gens ont le choix dans leur vie? Que voulez-vous changer dans le monde ? Dans votre propre vie? Quels sont les obstacles au changement? Pourquoi est-il si difficile de changer?" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, n.d., n.p.). This translates to questions concerning choice, and whether or not they have choices in their lives. The youth are asked what they want to change in the world and in their own lives. They are asked what obstacles might be in their way and why change is hard. LOVE youth are also asked to discuss what types of emotions they may be suppressing and how this might affect them. They are asked to explore what triggers feelings of anger. To consider what their lives would look like if

they got rid of all negative emotions leaving only positive ones. They are asked if they have someone in their life whom they trust. (*Leave Out ViolencE*, n.d.). These exercises take issues of vulnerability and weakness and rearrange the power of negative feelings into accessible, changeable forms. This empowering exercise helps youth to realize their ability to make changes. As they try to build healthier relationships based on trust, youth learn about themselves. They also learn to identify and recognize what they can control and what they cannot. These workshops in self discovery help youth strip away at their emotional selves, at layers of anger, pain and frustration, in order to help foster a positive sense of self and self worth; "LOVE youth achieve tangible goals which build self esteem" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b, n.p.). By developing happiness, they are inevitably making themselves healthier.

Teaching youth to identify potential violence hazards is high on the priority list of necessary social skill; it finds place in 15 of the workshops. LOVE youth work on developing appropriate emotional responses which help them to stand against violence. For instance, a workshop on cyberbullying helps to develop empathy and compassion for each the victims, the perpetrators and the witnesses. A workshop discussing the differences in meaning and emotional links to a house versus a home explores concepts of belonging and notions of safety. Analyzing various media has youth questioning ideals of beauty and sexual pressure. A role playing workshop on different social comportments be they passive in nature, aggressive or assertive, builds awareness and communication skills. Youth learn "to look analytically at factors which dominate some of their lives, such as poverty, racism, isolation, peer pressure, media messages, lack of appropriate resources" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b, n.p.). Some of the workshops mentioned herein are indications of the personal depths at which the program is operating. As Fieldman states, the programs "bridge the gap between education and therapy" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008b, n.p.). This is the act of healing through learning. LOVE youth are healing from the ill effects of violence and from being marginalized by wider society for lacking communication skills. As bell hooks (1994) writes:

> Learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that

allows us to face reality even as we collectively image ways to move beyond boundaries, to

transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom (p. 207).

MAP workshops all connect thematically with issues of violence, but focus more generally on

youth related issues. For instance, subjects like youth culture will be put up for discussion. More

specifically, youth culture through different trends. In a workshop on media, youth are asked if

they feel that youth culture is directly influenced by the media. The idea of influence here is very

important. By critically questioning the use of things like stereotypes and exploring which media

vehicles youth members engage most with, the workshop is guiding a lesson on the possible

effects of influence on their individual lives. This style of educating allows the individual to come

to their own understanding in their own time (Freire, 2009). Unlike a 'banking' style of depositing

information, it promotes critical thinking and facilitates knowledge ownership (Freire, 2009).

Once different ideas related to media influence begin to align through discussion, youth are asked

to directly address a media outlet through a carefully crafted letter. This exercise helps the youth to

recognize the possibility of contacting people who may have once seemed out of reach, people as

in Corporate Executives or perhaps a television personality. This exercise also demonstrates how

the youth, now aware, might possibly influence change in the media. As Freire explains, pedagogy

of the oppressed is a transformative process. It is a state of becoming aware of oppressive forces.

Through reflection and action—or praxis—the oppressed commit to effectively changing their

situation. Once the situation of the formerly oppressed is transformed, the challenge then extends

to become a "pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation" (Freire, 2009, p. 54).

Freire (2009) explains that even oppressors are oppressed and are in need of liberation. By

situating youth culture as a subject in a developing awareness and understanding of oppressive

forces—or rather, hegemony—youth begin a crucial, critical process that will effectively change

how they see and inhabit the world.

Deconstructing media and discussing the power of influence is developed in youth. It is

deepened emotionally by asking the youth to consider how people they know directly influence

their lives. In a workshop that has youth creating a digital flip-book film, members are asked to

think about the influence of people in their immediate lives. "Many persons, bound to a

mechanistic view of reality, do not perceive that the concrete situation of individuals conditions

their consciousness of the world, and that in turn this consciousness conditions their attitudes and

LOVE & War

their way of dealing with reality" (Freire, 2009, p. 130). People's influence informs who the youth are and how they themselves perceive of their selves; this cognitive connection is imperative for growth and transformation. In this exercise, members begin to uncover what they might have unwittingly believed of themselves. Marginalized youth often suffer self-depreciation, an act of debasing oneself because of the internalization of oppression. As Paul Willis (1977) explains of the plight of working class youth, they conform to their own 'self-disqualification' (p. 148). The unconscious internalizations of other peoples' ideas and opinions must be made transparent in order that it be addressed; "So often they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything—that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive—that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness" (Freire, 2009, p. 63). As written above, by developing awareness and an understanding of oppressive forces, youth begin a crucial, critical process that will effectively change how they see and inhabit the world. LOVE encourages youth's ability to inhabit the world in productive and powerful ways.

MAP exhibits. At the end of the year, MAP youth graduates see their work displayed in a local exhibit. These exhibits are held in public spaces that often see a great deal of foot traffic. In 2011, the exhibit was held in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. It stayed on display in this prestigious museum for 8 months (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2012).

In June of 2012, I was invited to the opening of LOVE's end of year vernissage, Dreams and Realities, "a raw and edgy exhibit that highlights the creative photography and writing produced throughout the year by the young participants of LOVE" (O. Tsai, personal communication, June 7, 2012). Below is part of the account recorded in my field journal:

I have recently returned home from LOVE's vernissage, Dreams and Realities. It was fantastic. The short, two hour event was brilliantly moving. It is well located in the main foyer at Concordia's Information Systems and Engineering Building, home to their Faculty of Fine Arts Gallery. With a direct passage to the underground metro system for Guy-Concordia station, this location is great for exhibiting the youth's work and the organization as it receives a large volume of foot traffic. The street level lobby with ginormous windows makes for excellent exposure as the work might grab the curious eye of passerby's. Indeed, many interested onlookers came in from the street to peruse the exhibit. They lingered on photographs and stayed to read some of the

LOVE & War

stories and poetry that accompanies the visual work. On their way out, visitors were invited to take a copy of (what is the last full organization newspaper), ONE L.O.V.E..

In the foyer, two welcoming billboards face opposite access points to the exhibit. These boards contain information concerning the organization, the work it does as well as an explanation of what the youth have accomplished over the year and the purpose for the exhibit. A long table near one of the building's main entrances houses the newspapers, ONE L.O.V.E. and its French equivalent, Imagine LOVE. The papers are arranged in a fanned out display. A long table is set up in front of the exhibit with paraphernalia for sale such as LOVE tuques and t-shirts. On the same table is a tall, clear cylindrical jar intended for donations, which, at a quick glance, shows the signs of a fruitful day. On an adjacent table are snacks, such as cookies, and juice boxes, a reminder that this is a youth-lead vernissage. The exhibit itself is comprised of eight billboards covered on both sides with writings and photography. The display consists of two photographs per piece of writing, which includes short stories and poetry. Each piece of work, be it photography or writing, is from different LOVE youth in Montreal with no direct correlation between the works save for the subject of violence.

The lobby gives an impression of being a mostly adult environment. It is a serious kind of space; a directed thinking space of higher education, with many adult students busy on laptops and in study huddles with notebooks and textbooks festooned about tables. The youth presence, however, seemed appropriate somehow. At first, it seemed a bit odd, so many youth in such an adult context, but the feeling fleeted as I walked through the display. Hearing giggles mixed with fast chatter coming from behind the billboards reminded me of bygone 'teen' moments. These LOVE youth are experiencing an obvious side effect from being so exposed in such an official manner. To me, it sounded like genuine, healthy nervousness mixed with excitement. It was a refreshing interruption to the seriousness of study—to the severity of violence.

The event offers a great deal of information to the observing eye. LOVE staff spent their time photographing the occasion and sharing words of congratulations and kindness with the youth. There was a particularly moving awards ceremony which saw many of the youth in tears while they held their heads high. The youth received folders and LOVE t-shirts as awards. One youth put on her t-shirt so quickly she barely kept balance. She wore it with such pride.

A CTV Television Network news crew interviewed one of the youth who held herself poised

LOVE & War

with a gallant smile; her hands behind her back, she fidgeted with her shirt. Out of sight of the camera, peers looked on with respect, excitement and pride on their faces. A father of a youth walked around the outskirts of the exhibit, patiently waiting with a proud look on his face. He had a tear in his eye when his LOVE youth graduate received her folder. There was a great deal of hugging and laughter amongst the LOVE folk, both staff and youth. The atmosphere was a positive one. The environment was safe and joyous.

It was a solid event from which to observe some of the work created by the LOVE youth and achieved through the organization. It put on display other elements of the organization that cannot be seen unless a member: the dynamics between all LOVE folk. As mentioned above, the whole demonstrated tenderness and caring. The bond between staff and youth was strong and very evident. It is certain that the youth have accomplished a clear message against violence; they have made themselves stronger by making themselves vulnerable in putting their stories out there for people to see and read in an attempt to help reduce violence in our society. I believe these youth to be brave. (Fieldnotes, June 19, 2012)

Articles in newspapers are often published announcing LOVE's end of year exhibit. One such piece said that the exhibit was "a must see for all people who need to develop a critical awareness of youth violence and its impact on society" (*Seaway News*, 1997). I would add: violence does not only reside in youth. It impacts us all.

Program 2: Leadership training. LOVE offers two phases of leadership training, titled, simply: I and II. Leadership I focuses on public speaking, conflict resolution and group facilitation (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008c). Phase II helps youth to develop a more effective means to communicate a message of non-violence. "LOVE has determined that the most powerful means to communicate the negative aspects of violence to youth is by youth that have been affected by violence in their own lives" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008a, n.p.).

LOVE's leadership training is based on principals of youth engagement (*LOVE.org website*, n.d.). This style of approach generates a program which teaches youth "public speaking, producing and performing spoken word, producing video and public service announcements, and group facilitation" (*LOVE - Leave Out Violence*, n.d., n.p.). Leaders promote awareness of non-violence in schools and communities. They encourage other youth to participate in In-School Violence Prevention Committees (detailed below).

LOVE & War

Unique to this program is a five day camp get-away held in Haliburton, Ontario. This training camp is held every summer and is open to all North American LOVE youth (*LOVE - Leave Out Violence*, n.d.).

Leadership training breakdown. The sample of leadership training material I received is extensive. Below is a summary. Leadership training is available to all MAP graduates. The general focus of these training sessions is more comprehensive than that of MAP. I have not gone into as much detail discussing the leadership workshops as I believe that, as a general principle, the leadership role is not suitable for all. More focus is given to MAP as all leaders must first complete that introductory program.

The curriculum of the leadership training is sculpted to shape a serious minded leader who has a mature and determined drive to reach out to peers in a resolve to reduce violence and get at the effects violence has on a person's psyche. LOVE leaders in training role-play scenarios of possible classroom antics. They explore emotions and the possible behaviours that result from different emotions. These trainees do mock outreaches with each other. They play trust and teamwork building games. They learn how to listen and methods for drawing out details from speakers. They develop tools for building understanding and how to gauge and judge what is being said. Concerning the latter, as I understand it, it is less about judging credibility and truth, and more about uncovering meaning. Leadership trainees are taught how to speak publicly and how to engage a room of people. They work on improvisational skills and how to seek out the positives in every scenario. They learn to read body language as emotional cues. More importantly, while in a leadership role as representatives of LOVE, they learn to distance themselves emotionally from outreach attendees. With the intricate yet hidden dynamics of power at work during outreaches, distancing oneself emotionally is a very important and professional skill to possess.

Program 3: School and community violence prevention outreach program. In the outreach program, LOVE youth leaders "educate more than 40,000 youth and community members" (*LOVE - Leave Out Violence*, n.d., n.p.) each year. They give presentations and facilitate violence prevention workshops in groups of "peers, professionals, and concerned community members" (*LOVE - Leave Out Violence*, n.d., n.p.).

Program 4: In-school violence prevention committees. From grades seven through high-school, LOVE leaders, LOVE facilitators and a school's student body create projects with

messages of non-violence. They create public service announcements, photojournalism exhibits and other visual arts-based projects (*LOVE - Leave Out Violence*, n.d.). These sessions span 24 weeks. They are facilitated by a LOVE leader and LOVE staff member. As with MAP, the program is designed to bring together witnesses, victims and perpetrators.

Held on school grounds, the environment permits a more intimate perspective on violence within the school community. Working with school administration, themes are adapted to current and local issues. For example, bullying, drug abuse, racism. The program objectives are also tailored to school living, including: reducing occurrences of violence within the school community; developing equality between students; improving communications skills to inspire peaceful conflict resolution tactics; to develop awareness for abuse of power; "promoting healthy living and drug awareness; to encourage the promotion of non-violence by the youth" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008a, n.p.).

Skills acquired through the in-school violence prevention program are listed as: "problem solving, conflict resolution, interpersonal skills, situational perception, anger control, moral reasoning, stress management, empathy, critical thinking, accountable talk, cooperation and presentation skills. To ultimately better understand the root causes and possible solutions to youth violence" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008c, n.p.).

Media education benefits are listed as teaching students how to access, analyze, explore, evaluate and express ideas and source materials from many different mediums. From this, students communicate messages of non-violence by using diverse media tools.

At the close of the 24 weeks, students will have either a piece of writing or photography on display at an in-school exhibit or have been part of the creation of a public service announcement for the entire school body. The 24 sessions are broken into 2 semesters. The first semester students learn basic skills of photography and different writing techniques. This helps "to raise awareness of the causes and consequences of violence. To express themselves on how violence has affected them" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008c, n.p.). The second semester sees students learning how to communicate and change the "culture of violence in the school" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008c, n.p.). In these later sessions, students skill up in knowledge dissemination by creative production.

LOVE's in-school violence prevention committees see some overlap with MAP in terms of protocol and the development of a safe space. This notion of a safe space, once again is built out of

trust, democratic values and by exploring what respect means to the committee members. There is overlap as well in workshop lesson plans, topics, methods, themes and activities: creative writing as a means to explore emotions; conflict resolution built through exploring behaviours such as passivity, aggression and assertiveness. These workshops, however, are geared to function in a scholastic environment. For instance, they explore bullying with more depth by using school grounds as location of incidents, they discuss the use of emotional control via blackmail in unhealthy peer or love relationships and they assess the effects of peer pressure.

These workshops differ in that they are the only place I've seen make mention of Twinkle's tragic story of loss (which according to Olivier, is something that is being phased out). As well, instead of media professionals, guest speakers are brought in to discuss issues like HIV/AIDS and sexuality. Another distinction with these workshops is an emphasis on feedback. In asking students to evaluate their LOVE experience, the organization is giving an opportunity for students to voice any potential qualms they may have had with the program: "How could LOVE improve its program? Do you have any additional thoughts or comments you'd like to express?" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008c, n.p.). As an aside, this reflexive approach is an insightful strategy which could help the organization to modify their workshops. This opportunity of reflection can help make them more modern and effective while ensuring that the organization is keeping up with the current needs and ideological trends of youth. A 'before and after' within the feedback section provides valuable insight as to the power of altering student's cognitive awareness towards violence. LOVE also learns of their effectiveness and of youth's emotional responses to the overall program. This feedback process allows LOVE to gauge how successful their program is by learning how or if students have changed their involvement with issues of bullying, sexual abuse, family violence, self-mutilation or gang violence. LOVE directly asks about suicidal thoughts or tendencies, drugs and alcohol abuse, and depression. They question the youth about experiences with the criminal justice system, youth protection, social services, counselors, psychologists and anger management. This heavy list of violence related issues can be burdensome and seem almost to penalize the youth, but the general sense of the document is of a genuine curiosity as to whether or not the youth/student has found himself or herself in a healthier lifestyle after having taken the LOVE program. LOVE sees itself in a nurturing role, helping to develop strong and healthy relationships amongst youth, peer to peer, and youth with staff. The act of learning new skills can

be beneficial in that it presents opportunities for youth to explore and communicate (Jennings et al., 2006; Zimmerman et al., 2010). Creating bonds most certainly fosters a sense of belonging, of connectedness (Wagman Borrowski, 2008). Working together to build something meaningful gives self worth (Fleetwood, 2011; Wilson et al., 2007; Wilson et al., 2008).

Additional information on leadership training. In LOVE's *Train the trainer manual* (2008), from which I have shared a large amount of data, they have included additional workshops in writing, photography and discussion. Interestingly, even the workshops set aside for potential use are filled with important lessons crafted into carefully structured lesson plans. For example: Rap, spoken word and slam poetry are used to break through preconceived notions of writing in order to develop meaningful communication. "Hip-hop not only opens possibilities for dialogue, but also presents its own boundaries and limitations. Thus the text examines the conversations that took place within hip-hop 'parameters', and highlights the conflicts that ensued between students within these interactions" (Uddin, 2013, p. 51). In his book review of Bronwen Low's (2011): *Slam School: Learning Through Conflict in the Hip-Hop and Spoken Word*, Mobeen Uddin situates education theorist, Michael Apple together with Low, as, he postures, both authors see conflict as a positive and necessary opportunity for learning (Uddin, 2013, p. 52). Using conflict as an opportunity for learning is creative. Similarly, LOVE workshops use critical thinking about conflicts as a means to facilitate learning about violence and its effects. It provides an opportunity to unveil power dynamics and other oppressive forces hidden within social structures. LOVE teaches 'power writing', or emotional writing, in order to really engage with the reading audience. This style of writing invites the reader into the conflict heavy world of the youth. LOVE believes that most readers want to share in the human experience along with the youth *(Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008c, n.p.).

Some other interesting topics in the additional workshops include exploring through discussion the power distribution in real events like school shootings. They ask difficult questions like: "Is the shooter powerful? Why or why not?" (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2008c, n.p.). As well, topics up for discussion are racism and discrimination. Students are given explicit definitions of stereotypes and prejudices, and as a group they talk about the school environment and what difference and 'being different' means.

LOVE & War

Other data about LOVE

The follow three sections provide other important data about LOVE. In Metric are some results of a three year study paid for by LOVE in order to gain statistical data about the effectiveness of their programs. In Accolades is listed the many awards and recognitions conferred to LOVE and /or in relation to the organization. In *ONE L.O.V.E.* is information in relation to the organization's newspaper.

(1) Metric. The following information is from the executive summary and conclusion of a metrics study done on LOVE's programs and from conversations with the late Executive Director, Olivier Tsai. At this time I do not know if the actual report was ever made public knowledge. For the purposes of this study, the report will be titled 'Metric'. In a desire to have concrete statistics of program effectiveness to aid in securing funding, LOVE sought a metrics study of outcomes based on participant feedback. Over a three-year period, from 2009 to 2012, data was collected in Montreal (both in English and French), Toronto, Vancouver, Halifax and New York. Participation was voluntary. Participants came from MAP, Leadership Training and Violence Prevention Committees. Questionnaires were completed both pre and post study. "The responses to these questionnaires were compared to assess whether youth had more favourable outcomes after program participation. We also compared responses by factors such as program attended, region of participation, age, gender and duration of participation in LOVE" (*Executive Summary*, 2012, n.p.).

The results listed in the Metric summary indicate that after participation in LOVE, 80% of respondents saw a personal reduction of violent behaviour. Participation in LOVE generated a desire to remain in school in over 80% of respondents. In a time when youth are considered wayward (Giroux, 2003b), it is important to note in youth a desire to be educated and a reduction in the impulse for violence. The Metric summary reveals that LOVE programs help to generate healthier "'pro-social' and 'anti-violence' attitudes" (*Executive Summary*, 2012, n.p.).

In Metric, an extensive study of LOVE youth leaders was undertaken to assess a 'dose-response relationship'. This allowed researchers to determine the effect of the programs from youth who have been involved with LOVE for a minimum of two years. Areas that showed strong, positive outcomes were, for example, in verbal expression with

more than 90% of respondents. Written expression is indicated to have improved in more than 80% of respondents. More than 75% of respondents indicated a positive response to questions about dealing with violence and social issues. These results demonstrate that LOVE youth participants believe themselves to have improved remarkably through the acquisition of attitudinal skills and social tools learned while in program.

In a brief exchange with Stanley Chase, LOVE co-founder and metrics' study supervisor, he lent me copies of each questionnaire for pre and post programs. I had an opportunity to read over the questions a couple of times while researching *in-situ*. They focused on details concerning the types of violence the youth has had contact with both prior to and during their time at LOVE. The questions also asked for the location of incidences, whether the youth was, prior to their time with LOVE, involved directly with violence and if, after having completed a program, they were still involved. This information, if released in the study, was not given to me. Upon reflection, the questionnaires inspired in me more questions than possible understanding to its logic, a fact that might have been altered by having the complete report.

The study concluded "that LOVE is indeed effective in reducing violence. It also helps youth acquire transferable life skills that not only mitigate violence, but also help youth to become better equipped to face the challenges associated with the transition to adulthood" (Executive Summary, 2012, np).

(2) Accolades. While conducting part of my research *in-situ* at LOVE's Montreal office, I had the opportunity of reading the many awards and certificates that hung on the walls. I compiled information from my field notes with data found in newspapers and in inter-organization memos and the Internet. All told I found mention of 23 different awards. Among these recognitions include certificates of merit given for exceptional support towards inner-city schools; a merits service medal awarded to Twinkle Rudberg by Governor General of Canada, Adrianne Clarkson, in 2003; the Toronto mayor's safety award by mayor of Toronto, Mel Lastman in 2002; the Queen's golden jubilee in 2002; the YMCA Canada peace medal in 2002 and 2004; The Canadian Day truth award; awards for crime prevention; for building a world of excellence; for outstanding contributions to communities; in business excellence; for exceptional social engagement; for building a better future in contributing to

LOVE & War

a "culture of peace of which humanity is in such great need" (Les Soeurs de la Congregation de Notre-Dame, personal communication, 2005, February 9); and the list goes on.

Grants and financial contributions are mentioned here only briefly as a means to register that LOVE is dependent on outside funding to effectively function. LOVE received a millennium grant in 1999 from the Canadian government. It used these moneys to expand to Vancouver and Halifax.

(3) *ONE L.O.V.E.*. The newspaper *ONE L.O.V.E.* began in December of 1997. The newspaper brought together work from all LOVE offices and from all levels of program. At times, this includes the writings from youth who follow the LOVE program in schools. The works include photography, poetry, news reporting, rants and creative writings, all in relation to the subject of violence. In general, formatting differs throughout the years. Some issues see clearly defined subject headings, or are divided by districts. The earlier papers differed considerably from the later versions. They contained advertisements, notes of congratulations from community leaders and writings from LOVE staffs. The earlier prints gave some youth titles, such as 'columnist'. As mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, upon entry into the MAP program, youth were given cameras and valid press badges. These passes gave them entry into places like music festival and political events (*Leave Out Violence*, 2008a). In the early years, multiple volumes were released throughout the year. Later issues of the newspaper saw more concentrated work from youth at the main offices. Also, they did not include advertising. Instead, they held writing competitions and offered bursaries. The last newspaper uniting LOVE offices was in 2012. After which, each office was to become responsible for their own publications.

Fieldwork 2: "I'm Starting to Think That I've Found My Safe Place"

It is worth noting that prior to going into the interviews I was convinced that a clear yet somehow united portrait of the participants would be revealed upon studying the interview transcripts. What I came to realize was both unexpected and complex. Upon studying the transcripts, I came to a troubling realization of "the research interview as a social encounter" (Etherington, 2004, p. 54). Although I had kept focus on the topic of LOVE and its work with youth during the interviews, my desire to meet the people behind LOVE threw my research off track. The interviews were anything but unified save for the participants' dedication to LOVE. The

data yielded over 80 different themes. As well, the process of interviewing went from that of seeking information to inadvertently becoming part of LOVE's outreach mandate: LOVE's members sharing through dialogue stories and anecdotes about their community and mission. In essence, I became the solicited! I had been sold on the effectiveness of LOVE and the importance of the work being achieved at the organization but this was my first experience with just how powerful a pitch LOVE members can make.

A note on the purpose of LOVE's sales pitch: Fundraising is given little attention in this thesis. Although, it should not be overlooked as it is in itself one of LOVE's chief focuses outside their work with youth. It is after all one of the ways they acquire their funding. LOVE is a non-profit organization with as little as 5% of its yearly budget coming from government subsidies (O. Tsai, personal communication, June 15, 2012). LOVE leaders and staff go out regularly on outreaches to solicit and secure funding from major organizations and private donors. Fundraising concerts are given every year. In 2012 it featured Gregory Charles with special guest, Oliver Jones (O. Tsai, personal communication, September 21, 2012). Donations are LOVE's primary source of income. Secondary is money received from its end users such as schools.

Becoming part of LOVE's mandate made me stop to reflect on questions like: Why choose to study LOVE? Do I have something in common with the people I interviewed? In Dan's interview he responded to the question, 'What is LOVE to you?' by saying, "*definitely an extended family. Just a bunch [of] people you can rely on. And regardless of who, if it's a completely new staff. …The people who end up working there are like-minded people*" (Dan, Interview, February 23, 2013). I cannot say that I feel like a family member, but I did start feeling like I fit into the LOVE equation. When I was working with Olivier, prior to his untimely death, I had begun to feel that my research was an important part of LOVE's future and its history, and that I belonged with LOVE. That somehow, I was summarizing 20 years of success in order to help them secure another 20.

Rationale for interviews. In order to really develop a rich, in-depth look at how LOVE operates it was imperative that I include the human touch, the lived experiences that are reflected in the people that make up the LOVE community in Montreal. I had chosen to conduct interviews as I wanted to observe LOVE from its roots. Rather than question respondents about the subjective

effects of LOVE's programs, or about the quality and effectiveness of their educational workshops, I wanted a view of the people who make up its central nervous system.

Method of interview analysis. As explained in Chapter Three, in the section 'Fieldwork 2', I have chosen to look at these interviews, rich in data, through a qualitative study lens. Qualitative analysis reflects what I believe to be an instrumental foundation of the social sciences: the careful interpretation of the rich textures of lived experiences. What can be derived from multiple perspectives and interpretations can serve well to inform research and the development of knowledge (Zhang & Wildermuth, 2009).

Logic of interview study. It is through the process of interviewing the people who make LOVE work, the adult members working with LOVE that I will learn of the organization's momentum; of how the people at LOVE are creating a violence prevention movement that is helping to empower youth. LOVE is a place where youth are gaining the skills necessary to get through some of the more challenging obstacles of membership in our society.

Participants' background. In this background section, I set up the participants by name and title, and describe how they became involved with LOVE. Having a sense of the participants' background, where they came from and how they became involved with the organization portrays the type of people LOVE attracts. As mentioned above, I conducted four interviews in total, one of which was not used due to a lack of transcript clarity. The three interviews cited below are from adult male members of LOVE's Montreal community; the interview not used was from the only female participant. Her personal information is not provided.

Dave is new to the LOVE community (interview conducted on December 7, 2012). He is a program coordinator for LOVE. Prior to his employment with the organization, he worked at a drop-in centre and a rehab-centre. His educational background includes a double BA in human relations and psychology.

Dan is a former LOVE youth who became involved with the organization back in 1998 through his high school guidance counselor (interview conducted February 23, 2013). After finishing MAP he stayed on to complete leadership training. He then volunteered as a youth leader doing outreaches and as a web designer for the organization. For a brief time, Dan also sat on the board of directors for LOVE.

LOVE & War

Olivier is the Executive Director. He has worked at LOVE since 2004 (Interview conducted January 25, 2013). He started off as media projects coordinator before becoming the Executive Director. Olivier worked in other non-profit organizations that used media to empower youth. His initial acquaintance with LOVE was by conducting an extensive research on the organization's program methodologies to be introduced to other organizations.

Each participant learned about LOVE through word of mouth. It is clear that these LOVE community members are all philanthropic in their desire to work at improving other peoples' quality of life.

Interview themes. In the following six subsections are key concepts found in the interviews. These themes provide a rich, in-depth look at how LOVE operates at its core thinking. The key themes are: Belonging; Visibility; Education; Youth; Violence; Cycle of Violence (witness, perpetrator, victim); Outcomes. As explained earlier, I had chosen to interview adult members of LOVE's Montreal community in order to gain perspective on the human element behind the scenes. This is where I believe the heart of this grassroots organization to be. The original themes chosen for the interviews allowed for more important concepts to emerge from the transcripts. All direct quotes from participants are italicized.

Interview theme: Belonging. Through the practice of storytelling through narration one can conceptualize an identity of belonging (Freiwald, 2001). The concept of belonging here is tied with that of connectedness discussed earlier. In connectedness, in belonging, we see the existence of deep, personal bonds. We see the altruistic individual in their intrinsic need to serve, in their compassion and caring for other people.

After 15 years of on-again/off-again involvement with LOVE, Dan still takes pride and derives a sense of purpose from his different positions and roles at LOVE. In the interview he often uses the possessives "*my*" and "*we*" when discussing LOVE. His devotion to LOVE is clear. Dan speaks of a time when he was disconnected from the organization. He tells of how this separation helped him to reflect on his time in LOVE and to see the organization differently. "*When I left, I didn't even realize it. I had woken up one day and it had been years since I'd been in touch with [LOVE]. I would see them on the news and feel like 'hey! that's my group! that's my organization!' I still had a deep need to get back in touch with them. I need to have this organization as part of my life so I can give back*" (Dan, Interview, February 23, 2013).

LOVE & War

Similarly, Dave's narrative resonates with these notions of belonging and philanthropy. When asked what he would you like to achieve at LOVE, he answers, "*I've only been there since September, and I've [already had] so many amazing experiences. [I would like to] learn and to give back as much as I can, too. This is the type of field that I like to work in. I like to make a difference in people's lives, specifically teenagers*" (Dave, Interview, December 7, 2012).

Olivier has a different spin on belonging. When asked, what is LOVE to him, he replies:

It's an important organization within our community, within the communities that we serve. And, I think we have a very strong impact in preventing violence. I think we are an important player in our society. And I think [...] we are doing what we set out to do and that is to prevent violence. So, to me, LOVE is a significant program, a significant player in the violence prevention movement and should be recognized for what it has done and what it's doing. (Olivier, Interview, January 25, 2013)

Instead of situating himself within the organization, he placed LOVE as an essential part of the community as connected and as belonging due to the work that it is doing.

What unites these narratives is propriety of connectedness. The concept of belonging here, of being connected to living more meaningfully, involves finding community in personal values (Freiwald, 2001). To be sure, I am not signaling conformity to wider social standards. Rather, the three altruistic individuals studied here, regardless of their unique perspectives, all find personal strength and a sense of rightfully belonging through their common purpose, their goal and in their striving to help others (others being both the youth and the community). In relation to the idea of belonging, the participants interviewed speak of a process of becoming through their work with youth and with the community. It is evident that it is not just youth who transform from their time at LOVE. Being part of the violence prevention movement allows these individuals to be reflected back onto themselves in very positive, meaningful ways.

Interview theme: Visibility. I asked the participants: "If there was one thing that you would try to market about LOVE, what would that be?" I was surprised and humbled by the responses.

Dave believes the kids are a marketable item because of how they represent themselves with such courage and strength when on outreaches. He speaks of marketing their learned skills, their empathy, their self awareness and confidence (Dave, Interview, December 7, 2012).

Olivier answers succinctly: The power of its programs. However, he elaborated further on:

LOVE & War

> *Well I think [] this goes in hand with the credibility that we have received over the past years by the schools and school boards. This wouldn't have happened without a really concerted effort in marketing ourselves as well and visibility, 'cause visibility equals credibility. If they've never heard of your organization chances of your being hired or being asked to deliver the program is diminished considerably. So, the fact that we are on the sides of milk cartons, the fact that we have partners in the STM [Société de Transport de Montreal], the Montreal police, all these reputed organizations and school boards and schools and the ministry of education, all these things lend credibility to us and therefore have enabled our growth as well. So, that's key factors. We always tend to think marketing and visibility is kind of selling out but to me I see it as hand in hand with the ability to grow and get credibility.*
> (Olivier, Interview, January 25, 2013)

Dan's answer reveals a strong emotional response.

> *LOVE per se is definitely its effectiveness. It's the most realistic approach to dealing with real issues. I mean, it's talking to people as if they are real people, it's listening to them as if they are real people, it's not trying to give quick fixes to real problems. It's a place for people to actually grow in meaningful ways and to develop meaningful skills to deal with rough situations in life. So, it just works. Over twenty years, [...] statistically it has been proven in terms of feedback from LOVE youth that there's something that works. So definitely its effectiveness.* (Dan, Interview, February 23, 2013)

In a time when image, brand and a strong public presence is crucial for survival to a non-profit organization (Nickel & Eikenberry, 2009; Olivier, Interview, January 25, 2013), it makes sense that LOVE seeks visibility and markets its philanthropic image, its compassion, its humanity. However, this is not without the potential for reproach as, often times, the marketization of charity gives visibility to the faces of those who support the cause more than the cause itself (Nickel & Eikenberry, 2009). Other questionable cases of philanthropy include the trickle down kind where consumers are encouraged to purchase a product in order to donate. This can be translated as a ruse for corporations to make more money while giving the purchaser a false sense of security for having been 'charitable' (Nickel & Eikenberry, 2009). Thankfully though, many charities are equitable, but I digress.

LOVE & War

In an attempt to gain more visibility, LOVE created a campaign called "Break the Cycle of Violence". It began during a brainstorming session where LOVE youth came up with the idea. This act of power sharing, a key dimension in youth empowerment between the organization and its youth members (Jennings et al., 2006) demonstrates that LOVE's methods include a more level power distribution, or at least that they are willing to invite youth into the core of its operation. The idea was to place the organization on milk-cartoons, similar to the missing children's campaign, yet different in that it would depict youth who have 'found' their way. For example, one message read, "FOUND. Jeremy found his way" followed by, "every young person needs a little support, especially if they have been affected by violence" (Québon, n.d.). Québon, Agropur Division Natrel also ran a donation campaign that sought likes on Facebook with a promise of donating 1$ to LOVE for every like it received. Not a bad pump as there is no expectation of purchase. The Facebook page is no longer active, making results unavailable.

The Break the Cycle of Violence campaign also saw a public service announcement screened in over 80 Cinema Guzzo theatres (*Leave Out ViolencE*, 2012, n.p.; O. Tsai, personal communication, July 13, 2012). In 2011 and 2012, LOVE partnered up with the STM in order to communicate a message of non-violence. The STM placed posters in three metro stations and on buses in Montreal's south-west (*Ici Radio*, 2011).

Visibility is very important to a non-profit organization. It provides recognition which ensures the means for growth. Visibility provides the public credibility that marginalized youth seek. This validation helps youth to transition from the margins of society. It is part of a process of dialoguing beyond the community to effect social awareness for the probability of influencing wider public perceptions—a retort of sorts or a counter public pedagogy working to reestablish youth as positive.

Interview theme: Education. LOVE's educational processes applies participatory practices, as Jenkins et al. (2006) would term it, wherein youth are both contributors and producers engaging directly with the organization's objective of violence prevention. In an attempt to gain perspective on how the participants perceive of LOVE's educational characteristics, I refrained from asking too many questions that might reveal my own ideas. I sought to explore meaning and answers through the participants' narratives (Zhang & Wildermuth, 2009). I coded 5 specific words in

relation to education, including possible variations when applicable: Educate (-ing, -ed, -ion, -es); Learn (-ing, -ed, -t); Teach (-ing, -er, -able); School; Curriculum.

Dave discussed with great passion the skills LOVE youth learn. As per his understanding, the youth become stronger people, they grow emotionally, they learn marketable character attributes such as empathy and confidence; LOVE youth learn about themselves and how to exist in the adult world that surrounds them. Dave speaks of how LOVE helps youth to reach such success by teaching photography, writing and interpersonal skills all within a safe space. 'School' is a place to give the LOVE program. Dave insists that going through school poses many challenges as teenage-hood is a difficult time of life. "*Your body is changing, you're going through schooling, you're chasing girls [or boys], you're trying to fit into different crowds, you're trying to define yourself as a person and amongst all these things you're not quite a kid, you're not quite an adult, you're in this fuzzy zone—teenager zone*" (Dave, interview, December 7, 2012). Over all, for Dave, LOVE provides valuable insight, essential lessons and life enhancing skills. The quality of the education offered helps youth develop and grow in a safe environment which respects the challenging time of life that is the teenage years.

In Dan's interview, 'education' comes up twice. He lists on his curriculum vitae under the section of education the skills he has learned while in LOVE. The word 'learn' is spoken nine times. He discusses how his learning while in the photojournalism program is hidden. How he spent hours working and learning without feeling or recognizing learning as the intent. He remembers skilling up in writing, composition and photography. Dan explains that the safe environment of LOVE is a kind of shelter for many youth. However, it meant that the transition into the adult world was a difficult one for Dan. Although, he later understood that exiting LOVE was another opportunity for learning. For Dan, a period of time away from the organization learning other skills brings the chance of returning to LOVE in order to give back more effectively. For the word 'school', Dan speaks highly of his time performing outreaches in schools. Dan also speaks of the difficulties of transitioning out of LOVE's leadership program in contrast to leaving high school. He explains that youth expect to leave high school behind whereas it is hard to withdraw from the familiarity and bonds created at LOVE.

The questions assigned to the Executive Director are specifically related to LOVE's educational status. It is significant to note how LOVE is classified in relation to education by the

provincial government. Olivier is asked: "Is LOVE considered an educational organization by the government? Is LOVE as a not-for-profit organization listed as anything else with the government?" In answer to these questions, Olivier explains that the government of Québec's Ministère de L'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) sees LOVE as a complimentary program to education. The organization is associated with the leisure component of the ministry. Olivier determines that the ministry's recognition of LOVE adds to its credibility as an effective violence prevention organization.

The word 'school' comes up thirty-five times during the interview with Olivier, the bulk of which concerns LOVE's programs being offered in public schools. Olivier speaks of how, prior to 2012, LOVE needed to make a case for the existence of violence prevention programs in schools. However, 2012 saw the creation and implementation of Bill 56, "An Act to prevent and deal with bullying and violence in schools" (*The Charest Government's Record*, 2012, p. 3). The details of Bill 56 are discussed further below.

Continuing the coding on education in the interview with Olivier reveals a discussion about learning as a commodity. Learning in the sense of the organization's potential to create learning centres wherein LOVE, working with other institutions, can develop a curriculum geared to teach its methodologies to social workers and educators. Olivier sees this as the means to meet the ever growing demand for LOVE's services.

> *I remember when I started, and that's not that long ago, I remember when we were offering the programs for free and we couldn't even get into schools. Schools didn't want our program, they didn't care about [our mandate]. Now we charge up to 10,000$ and we have a waiting list for the schools.* (Olivier, Interview, January 25, 2013)

Receiving payment for its programs, as per Olivier, brings integrity to LOVE's effectiveness in helping to prevent violence in youth. The health of the organization, Olivier determines, is based on having the end user pay for their services. For Olivier, that LOVE offers an educational program is without question, and the programs are valuable and socially important. They are essentially bringing to fruition the violence prevention movement.

Regardless of its educational components, LOVE stands outside regular, mandated school learning. Nonetheless, the organization is linked with many schools in their common pursuit of

violence prevention in youth. This partnership between LOVE and schools existed prior to Bill 56, but has expanded considerably since.

Bill 56 mandates that all public schools take responsibility for the violence seen within their communities. The bill contains four main demands to be met by the provincial government and imposed on schools: 1) obliging school administration to address complaints by victims; 2) ensure that "the action plan is publicized, distributed, updated and applied in schools"; 3) seeing students educated in 'civility' and Internet savvy; 4) establishing a responsible person in each school (*The Charest Government's Record*, 2012, p. 3). It is perhaps important here to question the term 'civility'. Does the government mean for youth to learn to "act successfully within the existing system and structures of power" (Archibald & Wilson, 2011, p. 22, citing Inglis, 1997)? I wonder at what point this maybe a sign of what Archibald and Wilson (2011) warn as neoliberal co-optation of empowerment discourse. Considering the success of the LOVE programs by way of their expansion into public schools, I believe it is worthwhile noting a probability of public health benefits if implemented on a larger scale. As Dodge (2001) explains, "few behavioural prevention programs have ever been brought to scale, although the successful ones (such as public schooling, immunizations, and seat belt use) serve as shining examples of public health at its best" (p. 68).

The three participants offer very different perspectives on education in relation to LOVE. However they do share an intention to improve the quality of life of the programs members (Jennings et al., 2006). Other unifying factors in this section are a drive to help, a determination to succeed and a desire to give back to the community (Jennings et al., 2006).

Interview theme: Youth. Throughout my research, I note that the LOVE community's perspectives on youth are filled with optimism, compassion, empathy and caring. In favour of uncovering participants' views with little inference, I avoid directly asking the participants their feelings towards youth and opt, instead, to assess their views through their narratives and the language they use in relation to youth. To achieve this, I coded for particular nouns and words that are often associated with youth (Faucher, 2009). These words include: youth; age (teenage); adolescent (-ts; -ces); hood (representing a time frame rather than a place); young; person; people; juvenile; minor; delinquent. To add texture to this analysis, I have chosen here to describe participants' physical countenance and at times a description of the environment of the interview. This treatment brings dimension to the interview as an event, as social encounters, (Etherington,

2004) and recognizes the reflexes of participants as they express their feelings and ideas further through unconscious actions. To avoid repetition of ideas and material, only relevant findings are noted.

When speaking of youth, Dave is very comfortable. His shoulders are relaxed as he leans back in his chair. His posture suggests a kind of story telling while his eyes are glossed over slightly and he gazes out of the coffee shop window. He seems nonchalant.

While speaking, Dave rarely uses the term 'youth'. Where he does, his use of the term is prompted by a question containing the word. Dave does use the word 'teenager' causally, 18 times to be specific. He speaks with pride as he describes the bonds he is building with the youth at LOVE. He attributes this to his being respectful towards them and by his legitimization of their stories and life experiences by being a good listener. Dave believes this behaviour towards youth prompts in them a personal development of confidence.

Dave leans forward on his folded arms and looks down at the table in front of him when he describes how he feels sympathetic towards the 'teenage' plight. He explains how he himself fell on hard times when a teenager and received little help from adults. He assigns the teenage years as a difficult time of life due to physical, emotional and hormonal changes happening in their bodies.

Dave talks about 'person' in relation to who the LOVE youth are. He describes seeing the "*real person*", the "*soft person*", open up while in program. He tells of watching the youth develop personal pride for the person they are becoming. Dave assigns to their 'person' traits such as strength.

In Dave's narratives, the term 'kids', or 'kid' comes up over 50 times. The use of this casual noun gives the impression of a genuine sense of kindred spirit from Dave concerning youth. Dave's obvious pride for LOVE youths' accomplishments is revealed in his narrative as he happily shares tales of "*our kids*" successes. Dave's possessive manner of speaking about LOVE 'kids' gives a strong indication of how well Dave has integrated into the LOVE community, considering that he had been there only four months at the time of the interview. As well, it signals that Dave feels that the youth's accomplishments are genuinely his own.

As we sit in a food court in a downtown shopping mall, Dan talks with purpose. His countenance is casual but business nonetheless. He is quite serious in tone and manners. He rarely smiles although his face is relaxed and happy.

LOVE & War

For Dan, the term 'youth' comes up thirty-two times. It acts mostly as a suffix to the word LOVE. The term 'teenager' holds a negative connotation. When asked, "do you think that youth might feel stigmatized by their experiences and having come through LOVE?" Dan replies, "*people will get thrown off by the word violence. And absolutely if you're still young and you're skating around, [or] still running around with a skateboard, or if you still look like a teenager and you talk about [violence], people might react differently. More often than not, as soon as you explain what [LOVE] is, people tend to identify quickly*" (Dan, Interview, February 23, 2013). In his narrative, Dan assumes that teenagers are misinterpreted on sight but if given the chance to talk are nonetheless effective in sharing a message of non-violence.

Olivier's interview is a mixture of serious talk and excitement. At times he lounges back in the bulky sofa in Montreal's LOVE office foyer. At other moments, he is seated forward with a concentrated look upon his face.

When speaking about LOVE youth, he is often excited and leans forward with a smile. Olivier uses the noun 'teenager' to signal a kind of evolutionary stage of life which sees tremendous growth, especially when the teenagers are passing through LOVE's doors. Like Dave, Olivier understands the teenage years to be complex, especially emotionally.

Nearing the end of the interview with Olivier, with his permission, we moved from scripted questions to a free-style conversation. This is the only place the term 'adolescent' comes up in all three interviews. The conversation, partially reprinted here, is quite intense:

- Lydia: I wonder at what point [youth violence is] a double edge sword. If we've created a fear of youth by increasing the awareness of youth or violence in society, and, looking at a youth as a catalyst, as either a place where it resides, be it as victim or witness or perpetrator, I wonder at what point…

- Olivier: I think it is. I think violence happens in youth. I mean, I remember going through high school it was everywhere. Once you were in CEGEP it's less. Once you go to university it's almost non-existent.

- Lydia: Yah.

- Olivier: Your hormones are everywhere. You're thinking about sex all the time. There's so much happening when you're a teenager. You're not even… [Violence is] a way to express yourself, to relieve yourself. It's the inability to articulate yourself in other ways. It's another

LOVE & War

means of expression. I think that it's almost an element of adolescence. [LOVE plays] a role in helping them find other ways to express themselves and alternatives to violence. [Violence is] really in that area [, adolescence,] and even younger as well. It seems as though it just decreases as you get older. (Olivier, Interview, January 25, 2013)

Olivier believes violence is innate. He sees violence as a vehicle for expression often used in adolescence when other modes of communication are not available. Violence effectively communicates an intended message. By insisting that violence is innate, that everyone is capable of violence, Olivier is equalizing rather than normalizing the existence of violence in the lives of adolescents. This levels out the probabilities of outcomes and renders all parties involved in violence as coequal. If violence lives in us all, adolescence then becomes a site and a time of great inner contention; where the battle between an innate urge for violence is met by a desire for more peaceful expression.

It is important to note that at no point in any of the interviews were the nouns or adjectives juvenile, minor or delinquent used. This suggests that adult LOVE community members do not hold youth as the problem. Their perspectives on youth are indeed filled with optimism, compassion, empathy and caring. As Dodge (2001) explains, "the source of violent behavior resides at the intersection of the individual and the culture interacting over time" (p.64). It is not the individual who is bad, or negative, but rather they are reacting towards situations that call for skills the youth does not yet possess (Dodge, 2001; Olivier, Interview, January 25, 2013).

Dahlberg and Potter (2001) write that "in the period of adolescence itself, young people experience many physical, psychological, and social demands" (p. 8). This is in agreement with both Dave and Olivier's respective perspectives on the developmental nature of the youth timeframe. I would argue that the LOVE participants I interviewed truly see youth positively. That youth have the potential for growth and a propensity to move towards a better, healthier, more peaceful lifestyle.

Interview Theme: Violence. The following coda is inspired by the interview as well as specific terms found in LOVE's documentation in relation to violence. Violence, as per LOVE, refers to drug and alcohol abuse, and indirect or premeditated harm against one's self and/or others. For LOVE, the term violence is broad and loosely defined. This permits an embracing of most anyone's ideation of violence so as to be, and remain, as inclusive as possible respecting that

the effects of violence can manifest themselves very differently in peoples' lives. The words coded for in this theme include: violent; violence; trouble; suicide; drugs; alcohol; harm; cutting; gang.

Considering that LOVE is an organization working in violence prevention, I was generally surprised to find that very few words related to violence were evident in either Dave or Dan's transcripts. This is not to say that the topic of violence is not present within the interviews, only that these specific coded words are not used. A variation on the word gang is used when Dave speaks about the type of persona youth will often portray when they first enter LOVE. He uses this term as a means to indicate the range of transformation, from gangster to student, a youth might undergo when involved with the program. Dave also mentions 'gangs' in relation to his peers. The word 'violence' is used by Dan when he mentions the website and when he speaks of the possible stigmatization of teenagers by adults, as mentioned earlier.

My interview with Olivier is rich in details concerning the workings of the organization. He speaks from a position of power and management. The terms violent, violence, trouble, suicide, drugs and alcohol are all used during the course of the interview. The breakdown is as follows: The term 'violent' is used once. It situates violence in the school environment. Rather than declaring violent behaviour a human manifestation, Olivier situates it as a problematic element of and a social response to inhabiting one of the heaviest trafficked youth environments (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010). What this statement permits is the possibility of violence to exist without fixing it on someone, more specifically—a youth. Therefore, for Olivier, the problem of violence becomes more readily the school boards' issue to solve as a whole rather than fixating on individual, blame laden cases.

The term 'violence' is used 17 times: It signals perpetrators as victims; it refers to the violence prevention movement; it is situated in schools; it is explored for meaning and definition; and it is aligned with youth expression. 'Trouble' is used when exploring the possibility of LOVE youth being seen as troubled by the presence of LOVE on their curriculum vitae. The word 'suicide' comes up four times, each concerning the tragic tale of Marjorie Raymond (see below for relevant details). Finally, the terms 'drugs' and 'alcohol' are both used once when Olivier gives LOVE's definition of violence.

When speaking about the distress of suicide, Olivier talks about Marjorie Raymond. Marjorie was a fifteen-year-old Québecoise youth who took her own life after being severely

LOVE & War

bullied by her peers. It was this youth's sad story that influenced Québecers to demand its'

government take action against bullying in schools. The outcome was Bill 56. As mentioned

earlier, this bill put violence at the forefront of people's understanding of school life for youth and

it helped to make the case in favour of LOVE's violence prevention programs in schools.

What violence is in many ways is definable by its effects or results. "Violence results from a

complex interplay of biological, psychosocial, and environmental factors that occur as young

people move from early childhood to adulthood" (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001, p. 12). There is no

straight course to violence nor is there one for its prevention. This fact makes youth testimony

crucial to this study, as we will see in the section on youth voice.

Interview theme: Cycle of violence (witness, perpetrator & victim). Looking over the

existing data I had gathered, I was intrigued by the low number of references to violence, the scant

discussion on the origins of violent manifestations and the lack of direct mentioning of violence. In

response, I became curious about how the participants talked about the three distinct positions

youth are said to inhabit in relation to violence: witness, perpetrator, and victim. In the following

coda, I sought the use of these three specific words.

In their interviews neither Dave nor Dan use these words. Considering that LOVE is not a

counselling organization but rather one that focuses on violence prevention, how important are the

positions youth inhabit in relation to the violence that affects their lives? As will be revealed in the

section on youth voice, is it crucial to overcoming the oppressive forces of violence that youth find

themselves in positions of power over the violence within their lives.

Olivier speaks of 'witnesses' only once during the course of his interview. He uses the term

when discussing the work being accomplished through LOVE's partnership with the Arab Jewish

Community Centre in the Middle East. The terms 'perpetrator' and 'victim' do come up during

this same discussion. Elsewhere during the interview, Olivier uses these terms interchangeably.

For example, when he is explaining LOVE's view on victimization:

The basic philosophy of this organization is that we don't treat the bully or the, what-do-you

call it, 'agresseur'… the perpetrator… we don't punish them. We treat them as a victim. We

really see them as part of this whole cycle of violence and they're just caught up in it.

They're not necessarily… it's not about bringing about higher power, anarchy, adult court

LOVE & War

>*or more prison time, it's about treating them as victims as well.* (Olivier, Interview, January
>25, 2013)

Olivier believes in returning a human quality to people who are often demonized for their poor actions or decisions (Robinson, 2010).

The surprising lack of discussion and direct mentioning of the positions LOVE youth inhabit in relation to violence unites the youth regardless of what effects violence has had on their lives. Poor judgement and bad behaviour is not met with pathology (Wagman Borowsky et al., 2008). Instead, what becomes of importance is where the youth are going once they have entered LOVE's program. As well as, how they are achieving their successes within the violence prevention movement. LOVE youth are confronting the effects of violence in their lives and communities in order to achieve personal growth and develop enriching life skills (Jennings et al., 2006). The fact that their position in relation to violence is given little importance is an indication of their significant movement towards a more meaningful life. Violence may be what unites LOVE youth, be they witness, perpetrator, or victim, yet the balance is the violence prevention movement.

Summary of themes. In the above qualitative analysis of interviews I have deconstructed meaning and portrayed some of the people who make up the foundational structure of the Montreal LOVE office. In this analysis we see that language is in fact not neutral and that language can portray how people understand the world around them (Faucher, 2009). In the interview language and metaphors we gain perspective on just how powerful violence can be and what great strength comes from the determination to fight against it. The perspectives on youth offered through the interviews are focused on honesty and on building community. As Freiwald (2001) suggests, in connectedness, in belonging, we see the development of personal value. Visibility for the youth means, as it does for the organization, credibility. But, more powerfully, it places the youth at a distance from living on the margins of society (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010). Education is productive in changing quality of life. When the interview theme of education is put together with the analysis of LOVE's workshops, an emancipatory style of LOVE's education philosophies becomes apparent; one that is critical in theory and serves practical applications such as violence prevention in directly addressing circumstances of violence. Overall, we see a treatment of youth that demonstrates compassion and empathy indicating a belief in youth capability, maturity, self awareness, honesty and perseverance. In the above six themes, we see key concepts that tell of the

LOVE & War

work, the hope, the aspirations of the people who are involved at LOVE. Within these concepts, we are privy to the beginnings of a discourse of peace and healing.

Fieldwork 3: "I'm No Different Than You. Let Me Speak!"

Considering that this study is concerned with the treatment of, representations of and empowerment of youth, it is of course important to bring in the voices of youth themselves. The youth voice provided in this section comes from youth participants in LOVE programs. All materials cited here have been collected in the public domain. They come from the newspapers *ONE L.O.V.E.* and from two compilation books: *L.O.V.E. works!: Photojournalism by the Leave Out ViolencE teens* (1998) and *The courage to change: A teen survival guide* (2001). These books along with most of the newspapers were acquired while researching on site at the Montreal LOVE office. One paper was collected at the vernissage referred to earlier, one was given to me by an acquaintance and one was randomly acquired from a free newspaper rack in a café. Relying on youth's voice from the public domain lends to the notion that some youth enter empowerment programs with purpose, with the intention to be heard and to advocate for change (Hoeschmann & Low, 2008). They do so in the form of poetry, news reporting, narratives, creative writings, essays, blogs and photography. In the following analysis I abandon some of the more conventional methods of data coding and delivery in order to offer a more raw interpretation of the youth voice achieved through the organization. As explained in chapter three, I apply a careful interpretation to chosen texts. I perform a literary reading to draw out the strengths, emotions and creativeness in order to better understand the world these youth inhabit.

This section follows the arrangement of ideas explored in the literature review section and the themes portrayed in the interview section. Some of the themes generated here come from their heavy presence in the LOVE newspaper. I begin by situating the concept of war on youth as through their voice. The youth voices cited here are questioning neglect and social exclusion. They talk about a disconnect between reality and fiction, and how youth are misrepresented by wider society. In the section rape, one learns how its' devastating effects lasts but that it is possible to find voice and stand up against sexual violence. In the cutting/self-loathing section it becomes evident that a culture of hatred and hostility can lead towards self-multination and feelings of alienation. Youth speak about the lack of love in their lives and how they cut in order to forget that

they are forsaken. These youth speak openly about self-mutilation, that rather than turning their pain outward onto the world, they sink it deep into their skin.

In the section on costumer culture, youth speak critically about consumer culture and ask that people be reflexive about their consumer habits. Identified in youth writing is a discussion of what being appropriated into the mainstream does to youth culture. By way of demonstrating that youth have the capacity to change their world, one sees a provocative conversation on the potential of media's role in society. The section photovoice revisits the three part process behind this visual arts-based methodology in order to observe youth discussing through visual documentation their represented identities, homelessness and notions of community. In the section called authority, youth are engaged in empowering themselves and demonstrate how they are navigating the different power structures at work in and on their lives. The writings cited here are direct examples of the key ideas as set forward in this thesis. Youth writings in this section including titles of their work are italicized for emphasis. (Note, when available the age of the youth writer is included in the citation material.)

War on youth. Roxanne Ryder (1997) writes that

Being part of the "We don't care" generation has led me to know more about drugs than I really wish to. Buying marijuana has been compared to buying bread, it's just that easy.

But not only do today's youth know where to get drugs, they think they know how to use them too. What's scary is the naiveté of my generation. They don't realize the down side of their Saturday night. (p. 7, 17 years old).

One of the main inspirations for this thesis comes from a realization about the existence of social hostility towards youth. It is, as Henry Giroux explains (2003b), a reality of the unseen structures of hegemony. It is a manifestation of a willful neglect passed along from one generation to the next through a public pedagogy hidden, in part, in popular representations of youth (2003b). Youth are not oblivious to these structures. They may not have the language to identify the oppressors and oppression they recognize. They can, however, voice their concerns with clarity. "*If you bring a child up to believe that the world is cruel and uncaring and beat him when he does wrong, then I ask you, were you not a child once? Did you not want to be loved? What makes you hate?*" (Baig, 19 years old, 1997, p. 9). This message is arresting as it identifies personal pain of both a physical and emotional nature; a suffering at the hands of society—that unnamed 'you'. This youth is

raising difficult questions. He is not expecting an answer. His motive is reflection. He is making a stance against social hostility through identifying patterns of wrongful neglect and oversight in the ways that this individual youth, like many others, is taught and raised. This writing is not punitive or intended for any particular person. It asks us all "*Don't you care? Doesn't anyone care?*" (Baig, 19 years old, 1997, p. 9).

LOVE youth demonstrate an ability to speak clearly about their social exclusion, and they do so skillfully. In a section titled 'Literacy Corner', 18 year-old Diederick Muylwyk (1999) writes:

My life is full of limits

I hate that I was born free

But raised with blinders

Like a domesticated horse

I only see what is allowed

By whoever has my reins in hand.

[…]So my life is full of limits and

Nothings truly free. (p. 26)

Social hostility against youth and oppression comes in many forms, including exclusion from society. The desire to belong, for this youth, is so powerfully strong that he chooses to belong to an identity of rejection, of denial, of a disavowed inhabitancy of 'adult' society in general. This identity of exclusion (Friewald, 2001) helps to maintain identity in conflict, a tool of oppression. In reinforcing an identity of outcast, hegemony attempts to disempower by distracting, by having youth turning their focus inward; to a youth whose identity is already precarious, as it is in a formative phase (Faucher, 2009; Hoeschmann & Low, 2008), this tactic keeps them from calling the powers into question. In the case of Muylwyk, he is articulating his feelings of disdain. He is evoking an image that tells of his inner plight, his yearning for freedom and a desire to be freed from social constraints. In this poem, Muylwyk is taking his identity of exclusion and forcefully returning it to the exterior world by way of saying that he refuses to be excluded.

"*It's time that we stop looking for someone or some thing to blame*" (Ernesto, 19 years-old, 2008, p. 31). In a feature article about school shootings, the writer makes a clear link to the perpetuation of fear, or 'moral panic' (Faucher, 2009, referencing literature on moral panic, citing Cohen, 1972, and others) over youth culture. Ernesto responds to a society that feels threatened by

its youth by making a distinct connection between fear and an ensuing difficultly to determine the actual problems and rightful solutions to the existence of violence in relation to youth. Ernesto discusses how the type of reporting that profiles youth as "*strange*" misses the mark on fact and reality. That youth culture is not actually a threat to 'good' social values; that laying blame on youth culture does not solve the fact that some youth are outcasts and treated poorly in schools regardless. Ernesto explains that panicking about youth presence does not change the social realities of the marginalized. That the process of laying blame only serves to further marginalize youth who are in need of attention. He looks towards parents for "*ignoring us all together. ...Others who think we are nothing more than overactive-horny teenagers belittle us, and it is that belittling that opens up the chance for another school shooting*" (Ernesto, 19 years-old, 2008, p. 31). Ernesto is critically assessing his inherited reality (Hoeschmann & Low, 2008, p. 3) and inherited identity (Butler, 1999) in a well-organized and responsible manner through print media. All the while he knows that, like Hoeschmann and Low (2008) explain, few pay attention to youth unless something extraordinarily terrible happens. Ernesto is asking for a remedy to misplaced adult accountability (Giroux, 2003b). He is astute and knows that "young people, […] have a lot to contribute to our shared understanding of ourselves" (Hoeschmann & Low, 2008, p. 2).

In much of the body of youth work achieved at LOVE we see examples of critical thinking and an ensuring personal development. These articulate young people are rendering a picture of the world they see and they inhabit that is sobering. They discuss very real situations and problems that affect the way in which they negotiate their identities and lived experiences. But opinion pieces, editorials and articles are just part of *ONE L.O.V.E.*. Stories of abuse, rape, starvation, cutting and self-harm, self-loathing, suicide, gang life, drugs and alcohol, and failure make up the crux of the newspapers' content. After all, the general intended message is of the reality of violence in the lives of youth.

Rape. As written in the literature review section of this thesis, identity is a construct informed by how one lives, who one lives with and how one interprets their experiences. In a very moving and painful-to-read piece by an Anonymous 16 year-old, we are told of a rape and continued abuse situation. In "*That really hurt*", the writer speaks of being raped by her mother's boyfriend. She tells of feeling shame and of how the violence of the event is reinforced by the perpetrator as the rapist attempts to establish power over his victim by continuously verbally

assaulting her after the rape. Through repeatedly shaming, he is enforcing an identity of powerlessness and shame that is burrowed deep into the psyche of the victim. This mind trap, sustaining of a violent act attempts to compound and turn a crippling identity of abuse inward as the victim likely relives the event every time she is called 'slut'. "*He actually made me feel like a slut and I feel ashamed for giving in to the power he had over me. I was the slut and always will be the slut in some way, who was scared silent*" (Anonymous, 16 year old, 2001, p. 6). This courageous writer is demonstrating an ability to reinterpret the effects of these violent events through her writing. In speaking out about the violence she lives, she reinterprets this articulated and informed identity of victimhood even though she is still greatly impacted by it, as is evidenced in her signature—Anonymous. In so doing, she is in the processes of emerging as a voice against sexual assault and its capacity to dehumanize. "*But I hope that one day, I will find the strength to scream it to the world, and I'll no longer feel like the 'slut!'*" (Anonymous, 16 year old, 2001, p. 6). Her interpretation of these experiences as something needing to be overcome is a demonstration of her inner strength, and of an inherent desire to survive and to prevail. This identity in conflict, the slut versus the survivalist, is a moment of transition whereby the writer learns to command authority over the power these events have in her life as she emerges into an identity of strength that advocates against sexual violence.

Cutting/self-mutilation. Low (2011) writes that conflict is necessary for learning in that it facilitates entering into a dialogue as a means to find resolution which makes growth possible. What is wider society expecting youth to learn if they are denied access to the conversation about them? What does it mean if youth are responding to hostility by engaging in self-mutilation? Cutting and self-harm as a method for coping should be a warning sign that something is amiss in the lives of these youth. In a '*special report on cutting*' youth speak frankly about their experiences with pain, with inner turmoil and with unresolved, unhealthy conflict. "*Drip. That's the sound of my blood going into the sink of my despair. It flows out of the wound on my wrist. From the cut that you caused by your hatred and judgement*" (Ashley, 17 year old, 2004, p. 32). Ashley is clearly interpreting a sense of self-loathing and '*despair*' from the world she engages with. She interprets and in consequence performs this '*hatred and judgement*' through acts of self-mutilation. This should signal that the burden from hostility against her is too great for her to bare without ill effects, without ill consequences. In "*My Life*", Michael tells how cutting "*makes

LOVE & War

me feel alive./ It makes me feel so free" (Michael, 17 year old, 2004, p. 32). In self-mutilation, Michael finds release from the rejection he suffers from his unwillingness to conform to normalized standards. "*I live my life like a negative frame./ Each frame tells a story./ Each story represents a cut into/ me*" (Michael, 17 year old, 2004, p. 32). Michael is acting out of a frustrated sense of displacement and his lack of belonging. Through his writing, we are made to understand that he is no longer seeking meaningful approval. Instead, he tells of performing the chaos that he is interpreting from his lived experiences of not belonging—of living without love—in wider society.

Of growing up without love, Freud (1957) writes, that the super-ego cannot absorb the aggressive impulses that lives in us all. Therefore, the unloved grow up without a 'proper' sense of morality. Instead, Freud deduces, violent urges are sent outward. But do they always?

> *I'm so sorry…I should have given you more than truth, because in reality daddy loves you too, and maybe in memory we can be a family for you, maybe love could have saved me for you, to be something worth imitating, instead of some fucked-up suicide bitch full of self-hatred and… loneliness.* (Anonymous 2, -- year old, 2004, p. 32)

I would add to Freud's theory on the development of an inherent moral system, that the violent urges in 'unloved' youth are often met with humility and a desire to be accepted; that these violent impulses, at times, stop at the self rather than turn outwards in acts of social delinquency. "*I feel I need this pain./ It helps bleed out my evil*" (Lindsay, -- year old, 2004, p. 32). For Lindsay, the consequences of acting out her aggressive impulses are brutal. Her identity is in conflict without a healthy support network in the world she inhabits and is interpreting a self, similarly to the other youth writers cited here, that she cannot bare alone. Without proper support structures, Lindsay is entering into a dialogue with only herself. This dialogue, instead of being a means to resolution and growth, imprisons her in an isolation that ravages her identity and turns her aggressive impulses onto herself.

Consumer culture. Culture is ubiquitous. As explained earlier, it is both a process of development and a product derived from the expression of human experiences. LOVE youth learn to unpack social structures and cultural practices through active critical thinking. For instance, in "*Consumers are consumed*", Alexia Corsillo analyses the use of media and brand names. She ascertains that advertisers exercise power over the lives of consumers. However, she explains,

LOVE & War

"*corporate America didn't steal our consciousness - we gave it to them. In fact, we paid them to take it from us*" (Corsillo, 17 year old, 1999, p. 6). For Corsillo, consumers willfully ignore the economic disparity between the distributers and the people who make our clothing. This youth columnist is exposing unconscious processes of consumer culture with its superficial yet somehow fulfilling, false sense of achievement earned through the power to purchase (Willis, 1977). Corsillo's writing is carefully crafted. She does not shame the reader, yet asks instead that people be mindful about how they support the companies they love. She closes by reminding her reader that "*It's time we take control back from the media, build our own lives, gather our own information and realize that clothes, brand name or not, [do] not make us, our everyday decisions do*" (Corsillo, 17 year old, 1999, p. 6). For Corsillo, power does not come through the act of purchasing. It is demonstrated through the ways in which consumers 'support' corporate behaviour. Her support comes through the act of naming oppression; it signifies her becoming conscious of the world as a situation and a reality that can be transformed (Friere, 2009; hooks, 1994).

On music. In another article about culture, Phoebe-Morgana Tallman writes about punk rock as a subculture. She analyses how youth are said to be desensitized to violence and sex, and how they are blamed by society for '*messing up*' the world with their music (Tallman, 14 year old, 2000). Tallman contrasts content from punk rock music against that from the mainstream and finds dissemblance in content comprehension. In doing so, she is critically confronting socially imposed roles on youth as 'scapegoat' and 'enemy' (Hall & Jefferson, 1993). She determines that mainstream music invokes sexuality and demands attractiveness whereas subculture music, like that of punk rock, talks about intelligence (Tallman, 14 year old, 2000, p. 11). Tallman's seemingly romantic conversation on punk rock concludes on a dire note: "*society is just harvesting the dysfunctional seeds they have sown and blaming it on us*" (Tallman, 14 year old, 2000, p. 11). For this critical thinker, wider society is missing the mark on what is ailing the world. For Tallman, what is said of youth by wider society does not reflect her understanding nor experiences of what it means to be a youth in the same world; she does not see herself reflected in what is said generally about youth. By applying critical thinking to what is said of youth subculture, she is rising above this imposed and expected role of subordination. By speaking out clearly against the oppression and hostility she faces in the world, Tallman is showing her ability to think and respond critically.

LOVE & War

Another rich example of a developing critical consciousness is seen in the article "*The lost origins of Hip Hop*". In this opinion piece, Angelique writes of changes she is observing in hip hop music and culture since its having become mainstream: "*Hip hop was once a way for people to express themselves but it has turned into violent, money-obsessed, women-using lifestyle music*" (Angelique, 19 year old, 2010, p. 8). Angelique questions how mass market hip hop came to replace the music that youth could once relate to, "*when rappers talked about real life situations*" (Angelique, 19 year old, 2010, p. 8). She talks of being "*hypnotized by the beat*" for impetuous capital gain and of how its effects on youth is '*poisonous*' (Angelique, 19 year old, 2010, p. 8). A fitting example of what Hebdige (1979) explains as youth subculture being a mode of resistance until appropriated and redistributed as popular culture. Angelique continues to listen to hip hop only she makes a conscious choice to listen to that which "*uplifts the soul and challenges [her] to make a difference in [her] community or better yet the world*" (Angelique, 19 year old, 2010, p. 8). In becoming critically aware, both Tallman and Angelique are unpacking the unconscious structure of imposed ideologies in society. Through reflection and action, they are challenging conflicting social ideologies and transitioning into a position of empowerment through engaged thinking and influentially being in the world (Freire, 2009).

To effectively empower a person, they must have both voice and influence (Cohen et al., 2012). For the youth at LOVE, voice comes in many forms: speeches, conversations, writings and photographs to name a few. All of these methods of communications are intended to influence. These youth are helping to develop and disseminate a culture of non-violence by sharing their stories, experiences and ideas about violence and its effects. In a rant, Trevor Hanna blatantly calls to attention what he determines as a problem with the Internet. In "*Media, it could be better*", Hanna looks to this tool of information for its shortcomings and insists that it could be better used to help humanity overcome challenges. Hanna concludes in appealing to "*the people who control the media need to make some changes for the better. A great thing is being sadly misused*" (Hanna, 15 year old, 2000, p. cover). Hanna voices concern while demanding for responsible management of media outlets. In using print media to help expose what he sees as flawed, he is cleverly working from within the system he sees as failing; a political tactic that is kindred in logic to the fourth estate. This youth writer is making smart use of his access to print and he means to influence change.

LOVE & War

Finding voice can be difficult in itself. Doing so with the intent to influence is a huge success for many youth struggling from the margins. For, in marginalization there is tremendous powerlessness. As explained by Hoeschmann & Low (2008) from experiences with the Young People's Press in Toronto, connecting youth to print and distribution helps them to transgress the oppressions that threatens to silence them and which keeps them at the edges of society. In "*Inner strength*", Irwin Best writes about finding a power in himself. A power he defines as "*confidence, inner strength and belief in one's self and in others*" (Best, 16 year old, 2001, p. 21). He explains that true power does not come in a physical form such as money or weaponry. True power is something metaphysical that lives within and which can be used to help others achieve strength and growth. As with Freire's (2009) concept of conscientization, Irwin is using his experiences of overcoming oppression to help guide others in conquering their own.

Visual images: Photovoice. Making visible the invisible forces of oppression and social hostility is not always achieved through words. Through indirect communication, such as with the visual arts, some youth find the means to express their experiences and ideas of oppression. Through the use of visual arts, they expand beyond directly naming the violences they experience, and in so doing they influence and inspire new ideas and strong feelings in their audiences (Mitchell & Allnutt, 2008). LOVE began as a photojournalism project and maintains to this day a heavy focus and investment in the power of photovoice. It is an effective mouthpiece for those whose voices are often silenced (Mitchell et al., 2006; Wang & Burris, 1997). Photography often provides a means to access difficult subject matter that may have otherwise seemed inaccessible (Mitchell & Allnutt, 2008).

In 2006, *ONE L.O.V.E.* published a photo essay which chronicles the violence of "Life in the city: through our eyes"; the eyes of LOVE youth from the five major offices. These 11 pages are filled with images that speak of a developing culture of non-violence. They achieve this through a frank depiction of the many violences these youth have and are experiencing on a day-to-day basis while living in the city. Some images clearly illustrate violence: drug use in two images (Anonymous 3, 2006, p. 14-15), drug paraphernalia (Tait, 18 year old, 2006, p. 21), money from the sale of drugs (Chloe, 16 year old, 2006, p.13), self-mutilation (Alex, 16 year old, 2006, p. 16), panhandling (Amy, 16 year old, 2006, p. 23), physical violence (Graciera, 11 year old, 2006, p. 18), unwanted nudity/exposure and sexuality (Eric, 17 year old, 2006, p. 19; Yasmin, 17 year old,

LOVE & War

2006, p. 19). These photographs present a bleak world. They represent a troubled and troubling kind of reality. Within these images there are no direct representations of institutions of authority; no adults present; no support structures outside youth culture. The strongest messages seem to represent a lack. What does this lack signify? Is it positive? Or negative? Contrasting this bleakness, we see other images in the same series representing youth culture: extreme biking (Anonymous 4, 2006, p. 14), graffiti (Aaron, 16 year old, 2006, p 15), friends (Ethan, 15 year old, 2006, p. 17; Martez, 14 year old, 2006, p. 14; Maximiliano, 19 year old, 2006, p. 21), busking (Lloyd, 15 year old, 2006, p. 13), cityscape and music (Amy, 16 year old, 2006, p. 22; Elodie, 17 year old, 2006, p. 20; Victoria, 2006, p. 18). Is this the opposite side of youth violence? Or, is it just another element from the reality of the lives of many city dwelling youth? What these photographs demonstrate is that these youth "are experts in their own lives" (Mitchell & Allnutt, 2008). They know the public perceptions that are informing their identities; they are voicing themselves through these assumptions as a means to expose the actuality of *their* lived experiences. Their lives are not of just one situation but are rather filled with many different elements and dimensions both positive and negative, both lacking and fulfilling. These youth are countering the pathologizing public imagery that is often associated with youth living in urban settings by demonstrating an ability to recognize and counter the many violent discourses of oppression that work to silence them (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010). They are making visible a youth culture that is strong and demonstrating the ill effects that comes from a lack of healthy support structures (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010; Giroux, 2003b). In this thesis, describing the photographs without simply reproducing the images themselves is done with dual purpose. For one, a clear reproduction was difficult to obtain. Secondly, it is hoped that reading the youth's work in this manner will build a mental image and empathy to bridge a void that silence often creates; to link people to words that have personal, emotional meaning so that our emotional memories are triggered. If capable of seeing ourselves as the protagonist of the tale told in these pictures we have reached a state of catharsis. Purged of the negative emotions that might haunt us, we are also helping others to eliminate the weight for their once silenced world. Through images, LOVE youth are exhibiting an ability to create a culture of healing through a candid exposure of the life they encounter living in the urban frame.

LOVE & War

LOVE youth do not only talk about themselves, they report on the violence they see in their communities. In *ONE L.O.V.E.*'s fall/winter issue 2010 we see a powerful photo essay about homelessness following the Summer Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia. This visual essay is accompanied by two short rants. The writings are inspired by an interview these reporters conducted with an Indigenous Elder while on site of a makeshift community for homeless people who were evicted for the Summer Olympics. The photographs depict scenes from the '*tent city*', home to over 150 residents and located in a "*reclaimed parking lot*" (Megan, 17 years old, 2010, p. 16; Rebel, 15 years old, 2010, p. 16; Sophie, 2010, p. 16; Stella, 2010, p. 16). The photo essay and the accompanying writings speak of the violence of gentrification. They tell of a reality of urban living, where "*the city isn't always beautiful*" (Sophie, 2010, p. 16). Three images show tent shelters, an eating quarter and sleeping quarters. Five pictures are comprised of different messages concerning housing as a right. For example, "homes for the homeless not ski resorts" is written in large block letters on a wall; a printed sign reads "homes for all" is hung from a metal link fence. One picture gives an incomplete yet understood view of the rules of the site, such as, "… respect for every tent village participant" and "…will be collectively and cooperatively by all…". This picture is a strong example of the existence of community within homelessness, a social reality often treated as disconnected, individual cases. Two images are of graffiti. Two other pictures depict people gathered in circles. Another gathering is around a fire and the other gives the impression of a discussion circle. One image reveals industrial decay with filthy windows, stained cement brick walls and a fire escape leading to an unseen location somewhere out of view. This photo essay on homelessness is symbolic of youth's often displaced inhabitancy of wider society. As Dillabough and Kennelly (2010) explain, concepts of space carry with it symbolic and often unseen implications as space is not just a place of occupancy. They go on the write that

> Because social space is inscribed at once in spatial structures and in the mental structures that are partly produced by the incorporation of these structures, space is one of the sites where power is asserted and exercised, and, no doubt in its subtlest form, as symbolic violence that goes unperceived as violence. (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010, p. 99, citing Bourdieu, 1999)

These LOVE youth are recognizing the right for a just inhabitancy. They are speaking against social exclusion and gentrification, and of the violence of being expelled from wider society (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010). These youth are identifying themselves with the plight of the

homeless who were extricated, who were evicted from their homes; they are making a statement against the power behind 'legitimized' citizenship (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010). In doing so, they are voicing the rights of the marginalized and the displaced. These youth are locating themselves within a very real and important discussion on housing rights, regardless of it being a tent or on the streets; they are talking about authorized inhabitancy and the power of exclusion. In critically assessing gentrification and its effects on the homeless, these LOVE youth are taking notice of the "political discourses [that] serve a fundamentally classificatory function in regulating young people's cultural narrative of citizenship" (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010, p. 187). These images are examples that demonstrate the three part process of photovoice as explained in the literature review. They capture life as it unfolds. They are provocatively inspiring critical dialogue concerning their subject matter both connotative and denotative in meaning. Lastly, I believe, that being in print is how they intend to inform and influence policy makers.

I would like to briefly return to the notion of citizenship as it extends beyond state identity. Belonging is a key concept throughout this thesis. Psychologist, George Herbert Mead believes "that the self is essentially social and the internal life of the subject develops through a perspective that involves general, intersubjectively shared meanings" (Alcoff & Mendieta, 2003, p. viii). We are inherently social.

Mead believes that we become who we are because we learn and inhabit, to some degree, the various roles and thinking that go into making up our society and its rules. This, he determines, happens through the processing and exchanging of meaning made language through a "system of universally significant symbols" (Mead, 2003, p. 37). We internalize others' perspectives, so that, in a way, we may know who we are in relation to other people in society (Mead, 2003). Mead (2003) goes on to explains that

> the self reaches its full development by organizing these individual attitudes of others into the organized social or group attitudes, and by thus becoming an individual reflection of the general systematic pattern of social or group behavior in which it and the others are all involved—a pattern which enters as a whole into the individual's experience in terms of these organized group attitudes which, through the mechanism of his central nervous system, he takes toward himself, just as he takes the individual attitudes of others. (p. 38)

LOVE & War

On that account, I am still me, however I am socially understood or recognizable, in part, due to my relationship with a larger body of people like me. This relationship is understood through exchanges. These exchanges enabled through 'language' inform my identity. My identity, then, is part social construct within which language facilitates the formation of subject-hood. This has two relative points. One is towards the people who become involved with LOVE. As we saw in the above interviews, their identity of philanthropy unites them in their determination to help others. This unity yields safety and determines better success towards their common goals. The second is in relation to any demographic of people categorized by identity, be it ethnicity, sexuality, class, age or other, as this process of categorization must be identified as problematic as it comes with its own unresolved conflict of authenticity and expectations.

From here I return to youth writing however it remains linked through photovoice. Youth armed with cameras willing to portray their world are not the only photographers willing to influence using imagery. Desiree Mayor (2000) writes in "*Society's reflections*" about the destructive forces of media's stereotyping of ethnicity and portrayals of physical perfection. Mayor's writing demonstrates her understanding of media's ability to inform wider society. What Mayor calls to judgement is the '*subliminal*', quasi reality shared through media producers and maintained through its consumership. She questions the use of exchanged meaning through a language of media generated authenticity which, she states, attempts to guide our very existence and identity. Through imagery "*The media has the power to show us who we are or tell us what to be*" (Mayor, 18 years old, 2000, p. 9). In Mayor's opinion, the fictional world created by the media causes the reality of bulimia, anorexia and feelings of ugliness. Her judgement here based on an ability to analyze the force of indirect influence. Through her writing, Mayor is sharing her ability to think critically about the society she lives in. Mayor is essentially refusing negative popular representations of youth that work to inform wider society (Giroux, 2003b).

Authority. As the last section of youth voice, I wanted to return to their writings briefly in order to discuss the importance of authority. Authority is an issue of real concern when considering youth empowerment programs. It comes in many forms. It is a dynamic of empowerment that comes when a person finds their voice. It is a force of contention when trying to break free from oppression. It is a dynamic that affects how youth engages with empowerment organizations (Jennings et al., 2006). Not to mention, it is one of the biggest social inhibitors and

supporters of the war on youth (Giroux, 2003b), but that is authority in a different sense. Some youth use a kind of "crowded talk" to appeal to and situate authority within empowerment projects. What this means is that "a speaker's utterances are 'filled to overflowing' with other people's words, through quotes, indirect references and paraphrases, accents, and allusions" (Soep, 2006, p. 198; citing the theories of Bahktin and others). The impression of authority youth return in their 'crowded talk' is quite humbling. At this I am reminded of a lesson about good writing taught during my undergrad: as a writer, you are not free to break from traditional rules unless you have proven mastery of them first—unless you have author-ity. In "*St. Bullshit College*", Andrew uses 'crowded talk' in a passionate and articulate poem, cited here in full:

Forced words lead to fiction
Fallacious and foul and
focused on diction
With conviction I vomit
vile visual themes
Prophetic, pathetic,
describing false dreams
It seems that with effort
my honesty fails
Holy words, holy shit,
from the holiest grail
You drink it in, and my
blood's sacrificed
For these words
In my mind they act like
a vice
Narrowing my knowledge
My once flexible mind
go to St. Bullshit
College.

LOVE & War

There'll be no resurrection, I stand unerect

For I am the saved now,

I am The Elect

Limp, languid, unlawful,

soliciting verse

I manipulate language,

creating Ham's curse

Condemning the children, generations to come

To be uneducated, lame,

blind, deaf, and dumb

Believing my word, they

create a whole nation

They have all the facts,

but no justification

Fact itself makes an

honourable mention

When one brings up a

fact, we still have circumvention.

But now I digress, as all

humans should

I admit I forgot how to

write as I should

I forgot that a poem's

emotion expressed

And that that is where

honesty should manifest

I'm a poet, I know it, I

show it: I do

Convention has ruined

> *me, as it has you*
>
> *Break away from the*
>
> *vice, focus on what is*
>
> *true*
>
> *And then, only then, can*
>
> *you truly be you.* (Andrew, 19 year old, 2006, p. 15)

This poem is rich and powerful. There are so many fantastic points and references throughout the many lines. In itself, it could serve a full chapter's worth of analysis on youth voice and empowerment. Alas, here is but a small literary explication. Comparable to the beat generation of poetry in the 1950s, its intended lack of end punctuation leaves the reader slightly breathless and light headed as they are sped along their reading, an effect of beat poetry that is said to induce transcendence through starving the brain of oxygen. Andrew's fast paced poem demonstrates transcendence as he pulls his reader into journeying with him.

 In the first stanza, Andrew is struggling with conformity as it restricts his creativity, '*My once Flexible mind*'. In the second stanza, the now educated Andrew is a sinner, but not in the traditional sense. Andrew is a sinner, like in '*Ham's curse*' in that he exposes society for its flawed expectation of compliancy. As he learns to '*manipulate language*' he is pronouncing how future generations will also be condemned into following structural norms. To compound this point, Andrew is portraying his own non-conformity to traditional writing by playing with the style of his narrative in favour of producing a creative piece of writing which demonstrates power and mindfulness. In the third and final stanza, Andrew is the transgressed. He is effectively rejecting imposed rules and authority by frankly stating that he had fallen due to conformity, '*convention has ruined me*'. When he concludes his poem, Andrew is using 'crowded talk' in an ironic juxtaposition by appropriating phrases that are intended to uplift and inspire youth to share and write about their lives and experiences: "*break away from the/ vice*" and "*And then, only then, can/ you truly be you*". It is ironic because this tactic is used by program coordinators who themselves are not permitted to '*break away*' from their roles and duties as employees. "If people are not critically aware of the visible and invisible structures and processes that make up social institutions and practices, nor of their own role and actions within these institutions and practices, there is little room for empowerment" (Jennings et al., 2006, p. 47, paraphrasing Freire). It is one thing to invite

youth to develop, to grow towards empowerment and critical awareness but it will not work unless the youth is willing to embrace the philosophies and ideas being offered. It will not work as intended if all involved aren't working reflexively towards the same goals.

Summary of youth voice. In the opening to Fieldwork 2 above, Roxanne Ryder (1997, 17 years old, p. 7) demonstrates that the social tropes used to define youth become a way to understand their own identities. These tropes they use against themselves express a form of moral panic from within. Ryder is demonstrating an anti-youth sentiment as a means to protect herself from being a youth and from the judgments of wider society. This is clearly expressed in words like "*naiveté*" yet critiqued all the same by emphasizing the 'title' of her generation. This is an affirmation of the existence of an inner conflict, one with which she is negotiating meaning. It is demonstrative at once of an identity in a state of conflict resolution as it is a means to issue authority. In order to legitimize her authority on issues relevant to herself, her identity and her being in the world, she is appropriating a public image of her generation. Ryder is using a form of 'crowed talk' by way of stating a recognition of a problem (Soep, 2006), and she is taking stance against its interpretation by wider society.

Most of the youth voices cited here are bleak and dire. Nonetheless, messages of hope, growth, change and inner power fill the pages of *ONE L.O.V.E.*. Story upon story written about youth experiences tell of a difficult yet possible transition from a place of despair and powerlessness to one of personal courage and inner-strength. The credibility that comes from being publicly acknowledged is critical for each of these youth printed in *ONE L.O.V.E.*. It showcases these youth as capable, as significant, as powerful and helps them to move away from the margins, to transition and emerge into a place of meaningfulness within wider society.

Summary of Chapter Four

In the first section of chapter four I introduce the tragic story of Dan E. Rudberg. His death started the seeds of LOVE through his wife, Twinkle Rudberg. In this tale I cited an article that describes the general feelings towards youth and the moral decay of the institution of family at the time. Then I introduce the perpetrator, Kurt Finney who is essentially guilty for the crime of murdering Dan E. Rudberg but acquitted due to reasons of insanity. It is here that one also learns how Kurt Finney is marginalized by circumstances and poor judgements, and is himself a victim.

LOVE & War

After reconstructing the beginnings of LOVE, I move into detailing the organization through various documents found on the Internet and made available to me while I researched *in-situ* at LOVE. I describe LOVE's objectives and philosophies. Then I describe how the nascent organization operated and detail the different locations for LOVE offices in order to indicate just how wide a reach they have in violence prevention. Providing information on how youth are recruited and as to the requirements necessary for membership in LOVE emphasizes the level of involvement by youth. Since Leave Out ViolencE is a grassroots operation it is important to know where protocol, like policy, inform the basic structures of their operations. A complete view of the organization supports the findings revealed in the analysis of its programs. The general tenet of the programs is to teach marginalized youth important tools in critical thinking, in being reflexive and in engaging in meaningful dialogue with the intension of informing and influencing people about the violence prevention movement outside the LOVE community. Youth actively work on empowering themselves through writing workshops and through engaging in photography in order to portray their world beyond silences. Through LOVE's programs, Youth learn about the power of representation, how to negotiate their identities and communicate effectively in order to address and challenge the difficulties they face. In support of my findings, I reproduce some of the results from a metric study done on LOVE. It found a marked improvement in LOVE youth in areas like anti-violence behaviour and an increase in the desire to complete secondary education.

In the second section of this triangulated study, Fieldwork 2, I described how I learned that research is a social encounter. Most importantly from this section is gaining perspectives from the lived experiences of people who work with youth and with LOVE in the violence prevention movement. Six key themes found woven in the narratives of the participants interviewed reveal a strong portrait of LOVE's foundation, its people. I found that LOVE is a safe place of belonging where youth learn an identity of connectedness that is strongly linked with their peers and with those who altruistically devote their lives to bettering the lot of youth marginalized by wider society. Being recognized as a valued member of the community through the organization's visibility is important for youth seeking validation. Education at LOVE is a process of contributing and producing, of learning how to communicate with the world in meaningful ways. For the interview participants, youth is a time of change, of development, of expression, of growth and a propensity to move towards a better, healthier, more peaceful lifestyle. Of violence it is found that

LOVE & War

there is little power in the details. That violence is the symptom of a more severe social crisis. At LOVE witness, perpetrator and victim are all equal. They have all been impacted by violence regardless of their position. What became evident from the participants in this portion of the study is their dedication and their belief in the youth who come through LOVE's door.

In the third and final section of this three part fieldwork study, I complete the triangle by analyzing youth voice. I apply a qualitative analysis and literary explication of LOVE youth writings and photography in order to access youth voice with care and respect. Through both their written work and their photography youth are clearly demonstrating an ability to speak about their lived experiences of social exclusion while establishing themselves as capable, powerful speakers. Youth address issues of importance and challenge assumptions through applying critical thinking in both their writings and photography. Youth courageously share their pain and speak of overcoming abuse, of channeling oppression into personal strengths. Literary devises are skillfully used by the youth to enhance meaning and established emotional links with audiences. Youth gain attention in creative ways to address how social judgement with its ensuing hostility is alienating and injurious towards their personal development. Youth talk of wanting love but of feeling unloved due to a lack of healthy support structures. Youth voice their resistance to corruption and manipulation. They actively name the oppression they experience and witness in the world around them. Evidenced in the youth voice provided in this thesis, youth engage mindfully with issues of concern for themselves, for others and for their communities. Furthermore, it is clear that the youth who enter LOVE are effectively changing the situation of their own lives and in their communities through practicing critical thinking skills and by breaking silences through captivating photography. The works cited here illustrate that these youth are capable, that they are significant and important members of our society, that they are powerful and that they are dedicated to achieving a culture of peace. The works cited here, as well as most of the writings and photography available in *ONE L.O.V.E.* and the two compilation books, show that youth can and are moving away from the margins and transitioning into places of meaningfulness within wider society. In the youth voice represented here, there is a clear understanding that "language is more than a means for representing and communicating ideas. It is subject to our values and beliefs about language and people. For this reason, it is also a means of constructing an identity, a place of belonging in a complex world" (Dyson, 2010).

LOVE & War

Chapter Five: Conclusion: "I Have Seen the Horrors of Life"

Overview

Youth violence is clearly a problem. However, it is evident that the bigger societal problem lies within our understanding of youth in relation to violence. Youth are actively struggling through the reality of violence while being shoved aside and to the margins for the sake of living 'normal'. The war on youth is real. Harmful, negative, popular representations of youth work to subjugate them by wrongfully informing society about who youth are and the roles they play. In studying youth voice, one begins to form an understanding of just how powerful hegemonic structures are that keep the masses distracted and fearful.

Through studying youth empowerment I learned how youth are equipping themselves with the ability to challenge the world they inhabit in order to change it. Youth are learning about empowerment and learning to fight from within the systems that work to silence them. Through learning critical thinking, youth have the potential to break free from the oppressiveness of marginalization. In developing communication skills, youth demonstrate how they proactively address this crisis in representation by establishing their own, strong voices through powerful writing and through the production of provocative visual arts. Youth are finding a place for belonging in working within the violence prevention movement. They are helping to create a healthier discourse of representation where youth and violence are concerned.

I sought to study the grassroots, non-profit, youth empowerment organization, Leave Out ViolencE as it has seen more than 20 years of successfully working with youth towards violence prevention. Studying LOVE through its documents and through its people helped to establish a solid framework from which youth empowerment can be explored.

The youth voice provided in this study comes from the organization itself. This serves to further establish the notion that this successful model of youth empowerment works across time (from 1997 to 2012) and across context (Montreal, Toronto, Halifax, Vancouver, New York). Although my research is mostly situated in the context of Montreal, the location of LOVE's beginnings, this organization is helping youth become empowered around the globe (Jaffa and Uganda). With such a long reach, this organization with its effective tools of empowerment already demonstrates a capacity for global implications in the violence prevention movement.

LOVE & War

In analyzing youth voice through a qualitative lens, I hoped to have provided a deep and meaningful exploration of their lived realities through their words and images. The youth cited here have skillfully and often painstakingly shared their ideas, their lives and their experiences with the world with the intension of making it a better place for all youth.

This study aimed to unpack and explore many related questions. Below is an overview of some of the many possible answers as seen within this study:

How are we actually educating youth to participate in society? Youth who are marginalized by wider society are being taught through popular representation that their roles are already preconceived; that in many instances they are damned by their identity of youth. However, youth in empowerment programs are fighting back. They are being skilled in communication, are taught how to critically analyze the world they inhabit and how to combine these tools to influence the world.

How does a non-profit organization, whose focus is youth empowerment, help to diffuse negative stereotypes and misrepresentation of youth? It is in actively questioning and unpacking these negative stereotypes and misrepresentations that youth are able to overcome them. By taking the time to explore the impact and influence of misrepresentation, by being reflexive and by learning not to believe in them as truths, youth begin to diffuse the hostility of this war on youth.

What role can youth play in the movement to end violence, especially youth violence? Youth can and do take an active role in the violence prevention movement. By using their personal narratives of violence, youth are returning an impression of the world that is humbling and troubling in how it exposes structural flaws within society. In so doing, youth are demonstrating to the world a capability that should be recognized and embraced in an effort to advance peace.

How important is the position youth inhabit in relation to the violence that affects their lives? Violence has more than one avenue and many origins. It is a phenomenon and a reality to being human and to living socially. To this effect, youth inhabit many different positions in relation to violence. Providing they are given the opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns, youth are very capable of addressing the effects of violence in their lives and in their communities regardless of their position in relation to violence.

How does a violence prevention organization educate their youth members in critical thinking? Youth at the organization LOVE are provided with the space, the time and the tools to

LOVE & War

access the power violence has on and in their lives and communities. Through this process youth find a place of belonging and the personal and collective power to access difficult questions about themselves and their worlds. In connectedness, youth find the strength to explore the world through a critical lens.

How can empowerment help youth in finding a space for belonging in society? The emergence into an identity of empowerment takes commitment, time and great patience. In first finding community through the common goal of violence prevention, youth begin to see how they can effect change on a small, local scale. In taking these smaller steps, youth are learning the skills necessary to find place for themselves within the wider society.

How can young people who are marginalized by the wider public sphere break free of their experiences of violence in order to achieve growth through critical thinking? It is through communicating in a productive and earnest way with the outside world that youth find the strength of voice necessary to break free from former constraints. It is by learning that regardless of their many identities, youth can in fact impact the world around them. That they can work within the normative structures in order to change them.

How can real-life experiences be made into educational practices that promote independence and a sense of democratically civic values? I believe that LOVE youth learn that their experiences are valuable and that living life on the margins is nonetheless actively part of wider society. As youth democratically define the space at LOVE, they begin to work collectively and respectfully within a structure which promotes a sense of belonging and teaches them about the benefits of a common goal. In sharing their lives and personal stories, LOVE youth find a common goal and value in preventing violence.

I hope that this thesis contributes to the efforts made by the youth themselves with lasting implications on the advancement of a more responsible and supportive representation of youth in relation to violence, and in relation to wider society.

Limitations

I had a number of challenges along the way in the creation of this thesis. I was profoundly impacted and subsequently silenced for a period of time by the unfortunate, sad and sudden, untimely death of LOVE Montreal's Executive Director, Olivier Tsai. It took some time before I could return to work on this thesis. When I did, I found that Olivier had guided much of my focus

LOVE & War

on LOVE. This was easily enough done as I was hoping to have this thesis compliment the organization in summarizing twenty years of success, an idea that Olivier also shared.

At the same time, I have had the pleasure of being interrupted twice by childbirth and rearing. Because of the length of time it has taken to complete this thesis, I have changed my arguments and foci, however only slightly. I had begun this thesis wanting to focus more on policies that inform the war on youth. However, over time it became clear that I needed to shift my attention towards youth. I was initially going to juxtapose my findings with the work being accomplished at LOVE and their policies in order to create a discourse of healing in relation to violence for the intersections between youth and society. In addition, conducting a research project focused on the organization meant that I was missing out on directly working with marginalized youth and had to rely on my own experiences and assumptions. Working directly with youth could produce a wealth of knowledge in relation to how youth interact with LOVE's objectives, workshops, staff and environment, and in how youth interact with the violence prevention movement. One might learn of what is necessary in bringing this movement forward by the people who are said to be its inspiration. One might assume that direct youth participation would provide valuable first hand testimonies. Working directly with youth would be a rich opportunity for youth to participate in the conversation talking about what is important to them directly.

I do not presume that my findings are inclusive of all possible perspectives or youth needs. As well, I do not wish to generalize youth experiences; existentially, every life lived is in and of itself rich in unique and valuable experiences and perspectives. My research serves but to add more perspectives and add to the creation of knowledge.

Significance of Findings

It was my objective to access a successful formula in educating disenfranchised and marginalized youth. Recording and disseminating this information is essential so that it may inform the possible development of a discourse of healing to be applied in the intersections between youth and violence, between youth and wider society. This discourse of healing could help transform and inform the public as to who youth are and just what incredibly important and powerful roles they can play in shaping our society. This discourse of healing would serve to strengthen our society by teaching critical thinking while helping instill in all involved self-esteem and civic determination. It is my belief that creating a discourse of healing will undoubtedly

establish a more supportive society whose perceptions of youth will be less hostile and thus more positive.

This discourse of healing through the teaching of critical thinking would serve not only youth, but is intended for all who have been affected by violence. It is an education intended for wider society to help situate a belief in positive change. One that challenges existing hostility towards youth and anyone who might be marginalized, disenfranchised, impoverished in economics, education, support —it would be an "education as a practice of freedom" (hooks, 1994) from the constraints of cultural hegemony (Giroux, 2003b, paraphrasing Gramsci). If we must hate, is it not more effective to hate violence itself rather than to fight against those who are its victim?

Implications for Future Study

There are a number of ideas for future studies from this work. For one, further research on this subject would stand to benefit greatly with the direct inclusion of discourse analysis. As Gee (1999) explains, "language works in society to create better or worse worlds, institutions, and human relationships" (p. 13). Considering that "language is always 'political'" (Gee, 1999, p. 8), applying an in depth level of analysis based in discourse theory would help reveal how the structure of what is being said by the youth themselves brings considerable meaning to the specific context of the violence prevention movement in relation to youth. Furthermore, gaining entry on a linguistic level with its 'tools of inquiry' would allow for deeper, more meaningful understanding of youth expression in direct relation to their proximity to and engagement with the war on youth. Critical discourse analysis allows the researcher to "speak to and, perhaps, intervene in institutional, social, or political issues, problems, and controversies in the world" (Gee, 1999, p. 9).

Another idea for future study, perhaps one of the most important ones is, as I have noted above, to engage in participatory research working directly with youth members of the LOVE organization. I believe that this would yield important results in the domains of critical thinking, empowerment and collaborative learning processes. At the same time it would give youth participants a direct voice. This research would serve greatly in developing even more knowledge where critical thinking and youth empowerment education is involved. I believe that a related thesis would see more clearly the de-marginalization processes of youth who are involved in a youth empowerment program. One of the intentions for studying LOVE in the future would be to

release the findings so that the organization itself, as well as people interested in its style of empowerment education, may reflect upon LOVE's methodologies and outcomes in order to improve upon them. As Wagman Borowsky et al. (2008) suggest, sharing empowerment models will help the violence prevention movement and strengthen a culture of peace.

Conclusion

The popular representations of youth mentioned at the beginning of this study elude the problems of representation (Giroux, 2003b). The ideological structures of North American society sees youth as a hostile force which needs to be met with the appropriate amount of control and returned hostility (Soling, 2009). This misunderstanding of who and what youth are is a product of an inability to communicate and with our inherited ideological understandings of the world. It is something, I believe, that can be resolved especially if youth are given fair access and trust to voice and influence. As explained in the section on culture, youth subculture is a mode of communication, of representation that youth attempt on the world around them (Hebdige, 1979). Regrettably, their cultural manifestations are often commodified and returned as a means to continue the cycle of oppression (Hebdige, 1979) and maintain the war on youth. In youth is the capacity to represent themselves within existing social structures while critically analyzing and challenging them. I believe youth are very capable of acting as public pedagogues challenging representations that are unfair, inadequate, ill-informed and hostile. Youth culture is a valuable record of the phenomenon of youth identity in both their process of negotiating for space in wider culture and in how they reproduce their identities. Clearly youth are capable of representing themselves and the world around them as is demonstrated in this thesis. In so doing, they have, I believe, the capacity to challenge the war on youth and to change it into a culture of peace.

LOVE & War

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LOVE & War

<u>Appendix A</u>
Consent Form

<u>Title of Research</u>:

Talking LOVE: Youth Voice, Violence and Participatory Education for Change

<u>Researcher/Interviewer</u>:

Lydia Meldrum, M.A. student, Department of Integrated Studies in Education

Email: n/a@mail.mcgill.ca

<u>Supervisor</u>:

Dr. Claudia Mitchell, Professor, Department of Integrated Studies in Education

Email: claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca

<u>Interview Purpose</u>:

This study looks to deepen an understanding of this type of organization that works directly with youth who are teetering on the edge of society. The methods this particular grassroots organization applies to help youth overcome the effects of violence needs to be recorded. Is it imperative that the various successful educational processes LOVE uses be documented and analyzed. And, considering that this organization works primarily by word of mouth, it is through the process of interview with the individuals involved therein, you, that I will hopefully be able to gain a holistic perspective on LOVE. The results of these interviews will be published in my Master's thesis and subsequent publications afterwards. A copy of my final research will be given to LOVE.

<u>Potential Benefits</u>:

Researching this very successful non-profit will deepen our understanding of this type of organization that is dedicated to promoting the welfare of others -- more specifically, that of youth. Documenting the intricacies of this organization and how it has become invaluable to the community will strengthen an argument in favour for continuing support academically and

LOVE & War

financially.

Relevant Information:

Your participation is completely voluntary on your part.   Each interview will be held at a location of your convenience or at LOVE's office in the Hopmeyer Art Gallery and conference room. They will last approximately one hour to one and a half hours, and, with your permission, interviews will be audio-recorded on my personal laptop, for transcription purposes only; to be transcribed at a later date. The device is protected by password. Your personal information, interview segment and any transcripts from the interview will be kept in password protected folders under 128-bit AES encryption. The information you provide will be kept private and for a maximum of 5 years. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the data. For your protection, confidentiality is offered if requested. Please check the box (see below) should you prefer to be identified using a pseudonym. Should you desire to have any statements withdrawn, please contact me via the Email address provided. Please note that the withdrawal of any statement from published work will be impossible. The results of these interviews will be published in my Master's thesis and subsequent publications afterwards.   In the case of any future analysis of your information, you will be contacted with details about the analysis at that time and asked anew for your consent. The intention of these interviews is positive in tone, however, should you find yourself uncomfortable at any time, you are welcome to either take a break or stop the interview all together.

☐ Check this box if you prefer to participate using a pseudonym.   For your convenience, if you have checked this box, you may also choose your pseudonym so you may recognize yourself within the research findings.

Enter pseudonym here: _____

Other Information:

Interviews will be held within the months of November 2012, December 2012, January 2013 and

LOVE & War

February 2013.

If at any time you have questions concerning the interview or interview process, you may contact me vie the Email address provided above.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights or welfare as a participant in this study you may contact:

> Lynda McNeil, McGill Research Ethics Officer
> Telephone (514) 398-6831
> E-mail: lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca

I have read this *Consent Form* and consent to the research interview.

_____	_____	YYYY/MM/DD
Print Name	Signature	Date

_____	_____	YYYY/MM/DD
Researcher's Name	Signature	Date

*N.B. that Email sent over the Internet is not secure, therefore any information sent in this manner has limited confidentiality.

LOVE & War

Appendix B
Recruitment Announcement

Attention LOVE staff and volunteers: Do you have an hour?

I am conducting interviews on LOVE.

Considering the impact this organization has had and how it works primarily by word of mouth, means that it is through the process of interview with you, as a member of LOVE's community, that I will be able to develop a holistic perspective on LOVE. I am a graduate student at McGill University in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education. My stream is education in society. I am being supervised by Dr. Claudia Mitchell whose current research includes youth participation, policy work on sexual violence and uses of media in social change (claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca). Researching this very successful non-profit will deepen our understanding of this type of organization that is dedicated to promoting the welfare of others -- more specifically, that of youth.

If you are interested in being a participant in this study or for more information, please contact me at:

n/a @mail.mcgill.ca

or by cell

(514) ***-**** (n/a)

LOVE & War

Appendix C
Draft Interview Guide

Title of Research:

    Talking LOVE: Youth Voice, Violence and Participatory Education for Change

Researcher/Interviewer:

    Lydia Meldrum, M.A. student, Department of Integrated Studies in Education

    Email: n/a@mail.mcgill.ca

Supervisor:

    Dr. Claudia Mitchell, Professor, Department of Integrated Studies in Education

    Email: claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca

I am a graduate student at McGill university in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education.   My stream is education in society.   Researching this non-profit will deepen our understanding of this type of organization that is dedicated to promoting the welfare of others -- more specifically, that of youth.   Considering the impact this organization has had and how it works primarily by word of mouth, means that it is through the process of interview with you, as a member of LOVE's community, that I will be able to develop a holistic perspective on LOVE. The results of these interviews will be published in my Master's thesis and subsequent publications afterwards.

    For convenience, I will be audio-recording the interview on my personal laptop which is password protected.   Your personal information, interview segment and any transcripts from the interview will be kept in password protected folders under 128-bit AES encryption.   For your protection, confidentiality is offered if requested.   Please advise me should you prefer to be named using a pseudonym.   Only myself and my Thesis supervisor, Dr. Claudia Mitchell, will have access to the interview recordings and transcripts.   Should you desire to have any anecdotes struck from the results, please contact me via the Email address provided.   The intention of these interviews is positive in tone, however, should you find yourself

LOVE & War

uncomfortable at any time, you are welcome to either take a break or stop the interview all together.

Questions arranged by positions. Questions are semi-structured and open ended.   They are designed in order to access specific information from which to inform my research.

Note that specific questions have been drafted for each position at LOVE.

*Prior to the interview, participants will be sent by Email a copy of the interview questions relevant to them along with a copy of the consent form.

Founder: (Twinkle Rudberg, Stan Chase, Brenda Proulx, Clifton Ruggles,)

Background

- What is your name?

- What do you do at/for LOVE?

- Can you share with me the story of how LOVE was created?

- Had you previously worked with youth in a similar kind of capacity?

- Had you previously been involved with other non-profit organizations?

- How did you come to know the other founding members of LOVE?

- What were some of the strengths/qualities that these individuals had to offer the then nascent grassroots organization?

- Can you recall your expectations/hopes of LOVE in 1993?

- Has LOVE changed since you first began the organization in 1993?

- In the last twenty years (or however long you've been with LOVE), have you remarked any noticeable changes to the types of violence issues in relation to youth?

- In the same vein, has there been any noticeable change to the way media handles youth in relation to violence?

- Have you remarked any changes to the public perception of youth or to the types of services available to youth of available because of youth violence?

General sense of LOVE

LOVE & War

- If there was one thing you could change about the organization what would that be?

- If there was one thing you would try to market about LOVE what would that be?

- What is your proudest moment at LOVE?

- Can you share with me a memory from your time at LOVE that perhaps encapsulates your understanding of the work being achieved at LOVE? (fondest memory).

- Did you think LOVE would be celebrating twenty years of success?

What next?

- Where do you see LOVE in the next twenty years?

- What would you like to see become of LOVE?

- What is LOVE to you?

- Is there anything that you would like to share that I have not asked?

Executive Director

Background

- What is your name?

- What do you do at/for LOVE?

- How did you become involved with LOVE?

- How long have you been involved with LOVE?

- How did you first learn/hear about LOVE?

Roles, Responsibilities and Specificities

- Can you tell me about your role as Executive Director?

- What kind of not-for-profit organization is LOVE (membership or board)?

- What type of influence do either membership or board members have over the staff/ operations of the organization/ programs?

- Is LOVE considered an educational organization by the government?

- Is LOVE, as a not-for-profit organization listed as anything else with the government?

- Are there any mandates set on LOVE by the government?

- Does the government impose legislature on the organization which guides the direction or emphasis of the organization?

- Roughly what percentage of LOVE is funded by government subsidies?

LOVE & War

- How does this affect the structure of LOVE?

- Does LOVE have charity standing?

- How does this affect LOVE's structure?

- Has LOVE encountered any problems by it's status as a not-for-profit organization?

- What can you share with me about your experiences with this organization?

- Can you perhaps contrast your work experience at LOVE to other work you may have done in a similar field?

- What are some of the more immediate challenges LOVE faces?

- What can you tell me about the work LOVE is doing in the Middle-East?

- Is/ how else might LOVE be expanding?

- What can you share with me about the evaluative survey being conducted?

- For how many years has data been collected?

- What methods are being used to compile and analyze the data?

- What was the inspiration for the survey?

- What do you hope will come from the survey?

- Have you seen any preliminary results?

- Can you share with me any of the findings?

- What does LOVE intend to do with the survey results?

- Who will be releasing the findings?

- What method of release is set up for the survey results?

General sense of LOVE

- What is your proudest moment at LOVE?

- Can you share with me a memory from your time at LOVE that perhaps encapsulates your understanding of the work being achieved at LOVE? (fondest memory).

- What is LOVE to you?

What next?

- If there was one thing you could change about the organization what would that be?

- If there was one thing you would try to market about LOVE what would that be?

- What would you like to achieve at LOVE (personal goals within the organization and personal goals as reward from your experience at the organization)?

LOVE & War

- Is there anything that you would like to share that I have not asked?

Program Director:

Background

- What is your name?

- What do you do at/for LOVE?

- How did you become involved with LOVE?

- How long have you been involved with LOVE?

- How did you first learn/hear about LOVE?

Roles, Responsibilities and Specificities

- Can you tell me about your role as Program Director?

- Would you briefly walk me through the various programs from two distinct perspectives: what they offer youth and how they figure within the organization?

- Since you've began working at LOVE, have you made any changes to the programs and/or their structures?

- How do you define success within the LOVE programs?

- In your experience/opinion, has LOVE accepted youth it felt it might not be able to help or reach? In other words, has LOVE risked failing a youth in crisis?

- Without divulging any personal information, can you discuss incidents where LOVE might have been challenged in this way?

- How did LOVE manage the challenge?

- What does LOVE do when they feel that a youth member is not benefitting from the programs?

- How does LOVE operate within schools (as curriculum)?

- How is LOVE received in schools? (is the reception warm or perhaps functional)

- Does LOVE compete with other types of violence awareness/ reduction/ prevention programs (be it from other independent organizations or the schools' themselves)?

- Do Zero Tolerance policies in different schools affect LOVE and/or its work?

General sense of LOVE

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- Can you share with me a memory from your time at LOVE that perhaps encapsulates your

understanding of the work being achieved at LOVE? (fondest memory).

- What is LOVE to you?

what next?

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- If there was one thing you would try to market about LOVE what would that be?

- What would you like to achieve at LOVE (personal goals within the organization and personal goals as reward from your experience at the organization)?

- Is there anything that you would like to share that I have not asked?

Program Coordinator:

Background

- What is your name?

- What do you do at/for LOVE?

- How did you become involved with LOVE?

- How long have you been involved with LOVE?

- How did you first learn/hear about LOVE?

Roles, Responsibilities and Specificities

- Can you tell me about your role as Program Coordinator?

- What are some of the challenges you face when dealing with perspectives about youth?

- In your experience/opinion, has LOVE accepted youth it felt it might not be able to help or reach? In other words, has LOVE risked failing a youth in crisis?

- Without divulging any personal information, can you discuss incidents where LOVE might have been challenged in this way?

- How did LOVE manage the challenge?

- What does LOVE do when they feel that a youth member is not benefitting from the programs?

- What do you think are some of the greatest challenges youth face today?

- In your opinion, what space does youth culture inhabit in society?

- In your opinion is LOVE actively contributing to the creation/ dissemination/ distribution of youth culture?

- And, what does this mean for the continuation of LOVE the program?

LOVE & War

General sense of LOVE

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- Is there anything that you would like to share that I have not asked?

Director of Media:

Background

- What is your name?

- What do you do at/for LOVE?

- How did you become involved with LOVE?

- How long have you been involved with LOVE?

- How did you first learn/hear about LOVE?

Roles, Responsibilities and Specificities

- Can you tell me about your role as Media Coordinator?

- Is LOVE ever proactive in attempts to mitigate public scrutiny of youth in violent/ negative situations where youth may be involved?

- Is LOVE ever proactive in relation to changes in legislature or other political affairs wherein youth are the focus?

- Does LOVE step in as voice of/for youth?

- If yes, who speaks, is it staff members or youth themselves?

- Does LOVE send out backgrounders (info) or white papers (report/ proposal) in response to fund-raising events/ galas/ or in response to crisis relating to youth or domains where youth are typically present (high schools, public transportation, …)?

LOVE & War

- What role do youth play in the creation of the LOVE newspaper, *One LOVE*?

- Do youth storyboard the pages?

- Do youth select the material that will be printed?

- Do youth choose the intended messages and how they are laid out?

- Do youth seek sponsorship for the newspaper?

- Does *One LOVE* have a specified layout?   Is it the same each year?

General sense of LOVE

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- Is there anything that you would like to share that I have not asked?

Office Administration:

Background

- What is your name?

- What do you do at/for LOVE?

- How did you become involved with LOVE?

- How long have you been involved with LOVE?

- How did you first learn/hear about LOVE?

Roles, Responsibilities and Specificities

- Can you tell me about your role as Office Administration?

- In what capacity do you interact with youth members?

General sense of LOVE

- What is your proudest moment at LOVE?

LOVE & War

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- Is there anything that you would like to share that I have not asked?

Volunteer:

Background

- What is your name?

- What do you do at/for LOVE?

- How did you become involved with LOVE?

- How long have you been involved with LOVE?

- How did you first learn/hear about LOVE?

Roles, Responsibilities and Specificities

- What are some of the various roles/duties you take on as a Volunteer at LOVE?

- Can you tell me about your role as Volunteer?

- How did you become a volunteer at LOVE?

- What is your motivation for volunteering at LOVE?

- Do/did you volunteer elsewhere?

- How does LOVE recruit volunteers?   How where you recruited?

General sense of LOVE

- What is your proudest moment at LOVE?

- Can you share with me a memory from your time at LOVE that perhaps encapsulates your understanding of the work being achieved at LOVE? (fondest memory).

- What is LOVE to you?

What next?

LOVE & War

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- What would you like to achieve at LOVE (personal goals within the organization and personal goals as reward from your experience at the organization)?

- Is there anything that you would like to share that I have not asked?

Board Member:

Background

- What is your name?

- What do you do at/for LOVE?

- How did you become involved with LOVE?

- How long have you been involved with LOVE?

- How did you first learn/hear about LOVE?

Roles, Responsibilities and Specificities

- Can you tell me about your role as Board Member?

- Are members elected or appointed to the board?

- As Board Member, what would you say is your most challenging task?

General sense of LOVE

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- Can you share with me a memory from your time at LOVE that perhaps encapsulates your understanding of the work being achieved at LOVE? (fondest memory).

- What is LOVE to you?

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- Is there anything that you would like to share that I have not asked?

Program Committee Chair:

LOVE & War

Background

- What is your name?

- What do you do at/for LOVE?

- How did you become involved with LOVE?

- How long have you been involved with LOVE?

- How did you first learn/hear about LOVE?

Roles, Responsibilities and Specificities

- Can you tell me about your role as Program Committee Chair?

- In assuming your role is to review, select and prioritize issues, is there a mandate you follow? What outcome are you seeking in your reviews?

General sense of LOVE

- What is your proudest moment at LOVE?

- Can you share with me a memory from your time at LOVE that perhaps encapsulates your understanding of the work being achieved at LOVE? (fondest memory).
- What is LOVE to you?

What next?

- If there was one thing you could change about the organization what would that be?

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- What would you like to achieve at LOVE (personal goals within the organization and personal goals as reward from your experience at the organization)?
- Is there anything that you would like to share that I have not asked?

In closing, thank you for taking the time to speak with me. As mentioned in the Consent Form (see appendix B), a copy of my final research will be given to LOVE.