

Reflective Photographic Practice:  
Developing Socially Engaged Student Photographers

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the possibility of using social and historical contexts, image analysis, and personal themes to engage adolescent photography students in the craft of photography. This new curriculum was designed around large themes that correspond to the developmental stage of adolescence. Issues such as self-identity, teenage stereotypes, school, family, and community were explored through examining historical documents and photographs, comparing popular culture perspectives, and learning basic semiotics. The students then worked within these ideas by creating their own photographs and reflecting upon their art making choices. The new approach was implemented in an analog film class in which basic 35mm camera and film techniques are taught. It is argued that meaning making motivates the adolescent photographer rather than the achievement of strong technical skills. This qualitative study was conducted using an action research approach, in which the author was both the classroom teacher and the researcher. The study incorporates data collected from student-created photographs, student written responses, interviews of students, interviews of photography teachers, and the researcher's field notes. Major themes were discovered over time by applying a grounded theory approach to understanding the data. The curriculum brought a new level of student engagement, both in participation in the course and in the complexity of their image making. By incorporating the chosen topics, students' images were rich with personal meaning. Students retained concepts of historical and social uses for

photography and demonstrated a base understanding of semiotic theory. Furthermore, the data points to a stronger sense of community and teacher-student relationships within the classroom. The researcher argues that this deeper rapport is due to the concentration on personal themes within the practice of photography. Setbacks within the study included censorship by the school of mature subjects, a limited amount of equipment, and a limited amount of time with the students. This study demonstrates the need for art curriculum to provide connections between visual art, interdisciplinary associations, students' level of development, and students' personal interests. The research provides a possible approach to redesigning curriculum for photography courses for the twenty-first century student.

## DEDICATION

To my father, who did not get to see this accomplishment, but who  
inspired me to start the journey,

and to

Anya, Adaline, and Olivia – my best works of all.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

*“The artist can know all the techniques in the world, but if he feels nothing, it will mean nothing.”* Chen Chi (cited in Rand and Zakia, 2006)

#### The Problem

The smell of the chemicals, the sound of water trickling, the amber glow of the safelights; when a person steps into a contemporary high school darkroom, he or she is inundated by the same sights, sounds, and smells that occurred in school darkrooms of years past. In fact, much of the curriculum is the same as in photography classes from thirty years ago and herein lies the problem; the activities and skill acquisition expected in a current film photography classroom mimics the syllabi of yesterday, yet our students, shaped by current technology and popular culture, are resisting this classical approach to photo imaging.

Photography educators, instead of embracing the democratic nature of the camera, have focused on teaching complex technical skills and thus, build their programs to train future professional (i.e. highly technical) photographers. Even though history and culture affect the practice of photo imaging (Wells, 2004), photo education programs typically do not articulate this in their teaching. The focus remains on teaching for specific equipment geared toward the fields of advertising and scientific research (Newbury, 1997; Grove-White, 2003; Stanley, 2003). Issues of theory and social contexts are often left out of the learning experience.

In the public high schools, photography classes are placed in either the fine arts department or the vocational/career and technical education (CTE) department. Both placements tend to offer the same approach to learning about photography; a skills-based, technical curriculum that teaches camera operations and print production to prepare students for entrance into a specialized photography training program. For example, a typical beginning photography curriculum starts with learning the functions of the camera, understanding how film (or digital) operates, and printing a final image. Projects such as “depth of field”, “motion”, and “studio portraits” are common activities. I, as a photography educator, have followed such a curriculum as a way to structure the course to both mimic the other photography teachers in my district as well as reflect the curriculum resources available for photography education.

### Motivation for the Study

When I first entered the teaching field, I met many challenges, including teaching in three high schools in three years. Besides the typical learning curve of being a new teacher, I was thrust into being a specialist in the high schools at which I worked at. In the first two schools where I taught, I was the ceramics teacher; having only one class of clay in my undergraduate degree made it difficult to meet the needs of my students and maintain a working clay studio. Reading books and receiving coaching from other clay teachers helped me get to a point where I finally felt confident with the medium. In my current school, where I have

worked for the past ten years, I was to teach a few sections of photography alongside some ceramics and drawing courses. Once again, I had only one course at the university, but I purchased more “how-to” books, studied technical skills online, met with various photography teachers, and stayed one step ahead of the students. I patterned my syllabus on the teacher who previously taught at the school as well as on the other photography teachers in the district. The curriculum was very typical of a beginning photography course and focused on teaching the students how to be technically competent photographers. I grew to love the medium of photography and worked hard to pass on my interest to my students. Eventually, I was asked to head up the photography classes and grew the courses into a four -year program.

Over this ten-year period, I have noticed a distinct change in the students’ interests and learning patterns that impacts the effectiveness of the curriculum. The “tried and true” lesson plans are not engaging the students in the same way as they have in years past. Students are tech-savvy; they spend quite a bit of time on the Internet, video game platforms, and their cell phones, where they have been trained to expect data instantaneously. To slow them down and teach a multiple-step process to develop and print an image is a challenging proposition. The first semester of beginning photography has become a chore, a class to endure until the spring when more relevant and interesting projects, such as illustrating a piece of music, are offered in the curriculum. I have come to the conclusion that educators can no longer approach this course with

the same teaching techniques and learning activities as have been done in the past; photography educators must meet the needs of today's adolescents.

I chose to focus my dissertation study on developing and implementing a new photography curriculum to secondary students that focuses on engaging students through the social and historical aspects of the medium while asking them to reflect upon their image making process. Through documentation, observation, and input from the students and other teachers, I wanted to find out if this is a feasible approach to teaching photography and why this approach isn't used more often in the schools. With a student population in contrast with past generations combined with dynamic, new technologies, there is a need to examine the traditional approach to photo imaging curriculum. How can photography educators better meet the needs of contemporary student photographers?

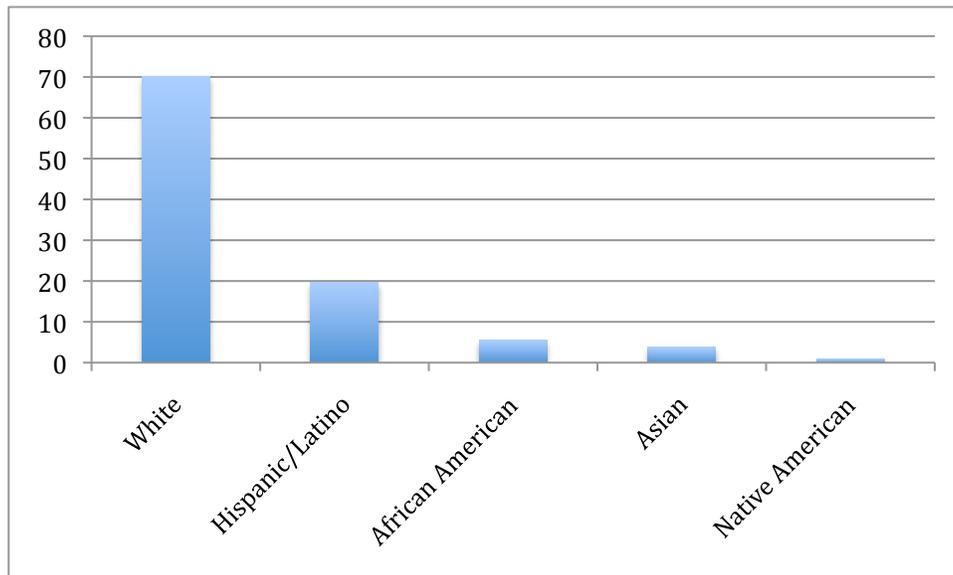
### Research Questions

The key questions for this study are: 1. What does a photography class that incorporates social and historical aspects of the medium include? How does this class differ from a traditional film class? 2. How do students respond to this approach in the photography curriculum? How do other photography teachers, who are teaching a more traditional, skills-based photography program, respond to this project? 3. How does this approach to photography meet the technical demands of the medium? 4. What evidence of the students' reflective process appears? 5. How can this

approach to teaching photography benefit the students? 6. How do students gain control over their creation and meaning making in their photographs? These questions indicate the direction of this research into redefining a traditional high school photography course.

### Delimitations

This study is concentrated within four beginning photography classes in one high school in the Gilbert, Arizona area. Gilbert is a suburban city on the edge of the Phoenix area. Its humble beginnings as a train stop in the middle of farmland are almost completely obscured by the suburban sprawl that has occurred in the last twenty years. The high school is one of five secondary schools that serve the area and averages 2900 students and 145 faculty members at this location. The students population for the 2010 – 2011 school year is 70.1% white, 19.7% Hispanic or Latino, 5.5% African American, 3.8% Asian, and 1% Native American (see Table 1.1). The gender division of students is almost equal, with 50.6% of students being male and 49.6% female, but the faculty is composed mainly of women, totaling 60% of the teacher population. This high school is the original high school for the Gilbert area and is steeped in a long tradition of school culture and town history. The faculty and students take pride in continuing events and activities that originated in the early beginnings of the school; in fact, within the faculty, there are always former graduates of the high school who returned to teach at the school and help carry on the traditions.



*Table 1.1 Ethnic Breakdown of Student Population*

The research period for this study took place during the fall semester when the beginning photography class is offered. The class meets for fifty minutes every day. Photo Imaging I, as described in the district course book, is a course that “will cover the use of manually adjusted cameras, and the development of black and white film. Students will receive instruction in lighting, composition, exposure, and history”.<sup>1</sup>

There is also an advanced photography class and seven Advanced Placement students who meet at various times during the day. These students were excluded from the study due to the fact that they had already experienced the Photo Imaging I course in a previous year. Photo

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of anonymity, the District Course Book is not included in this text.

Imaging I is offered at all the schools in the district, however, this study is limited to this one school and the four sections it offered.

I am the sole researcher in this study; thus, my perspective of the students' behavior and artwork is my own. My role in this study was two-fold; I was both the researcher and the teacher, playing a dual role as I developed and examined a new approach to the curriculum while keeping my obligations to the school. Being the teacher, I am constrained by responsibilities to cover course expectations, providing formal and informal assessment of student learning, as well as dealing with matters of attendance, school policy, and student behavior. While this contrast between participant observer/researcher and educator comes into play, I aimed for an objective stance as much as possible.

I am also affected by my personal experiences as a photo educator and photographer. The past events in my classroom, my training in academia, and my artistic practice have created my own viewpoint on this phenomenon. Furthermore, I view my students' artwork in a complex way; I have the privilege to include my relationship with them and consider their personal lives. My perspective can influence students; they might create work that they think will receive a high grade or use subject matter to which they know I respond favorably. Student reflections may be tinged with the fear of disappointing or angering me. Moreover, their viewpoints are influenced by personal, cultural, and religious beliefs of their family and community. Finally, I am aware that I am a female, white teacher working with both boys and girls and multiple ethnic

backgrounds; trust had to be built through creating relationships with these students. Every attempt has been made to diminish bias. I have gathered student written reflections, student artwork, and journal entries as well as kept copious field notes about the day-to-day activities and student behaviors. I further interviewed students to get a deeper understanding of their learning in this classroom. I also interviewed two high school photo educators who teach traditional darkroom photography.

### Limitations

All studies are limited in some way; this study is no exception. Because of the singular nature of the school and its students, this research is not generalizable to all traditional high school photo courses, although major themes may be useable. Secondly, I approached this study as a photo educator who did not train as a fine art photographer in art school; rather I am an art educator who happens to teach the medium of photo imaging. Thirdly, I did not consider Career and Technical Education (CTE) standards in my study. Photo courses that use these guidelines approach their curriculum in an extremely technical manner as mandated by state and federal CTE goals. Since I am no longer certified in CTE, I did not including these criteria in my curriculum design.

Another limitation is the restricted selection of students in the study. I chose to use all four sections of the Photo Imaging I course, which totals 105 students, but this course is an elective option. Students sign up

for the class because they want to learn the art of photography, they need a fine art credit, or they were placed in the class by the school. While my hope is that most students want to take the course, there are always a few who were placed in the course because it was the only class during that time period that was open or their parents chose the class for them. Additionally, there is a forty-dollar fee for the class and, despite some scholarship funding available for students in need, some parents balk at the thought of paying forty-dollars per semester for their child to take an art class.

Equipment accessibility is another constraint. The department has nineteen working cameras and fifteen enlargers for the one hundred and fifty students (with a class average of twenty-nine students) enrolled in the traditional photo classes. Additional accessories, such as flashes, tripods, and lighting are extremely limited. As referenced later in this study, traditional film cameras and equipment are hard to come by these days and school budgets have been dramatically cut in these tight, economic times. This study may have different outcomes if we had more cameras and equipment to use.

Finally, I purposefully limited the amount of digital technology for the students in order to focus them on gaining the skills necessary to operate and use film-based equipment. We did use digital cameras to demonstrate lighting principles and the Internet to seek out images and research about the topic we were studying. Photoshop was used in a few projects as an introduction to the program to prepare them for some

digital projects next semester, but not as a tool to create a body of work. My purpose in this was to limit the amount of variables in the study and, more importantly, concentrate the students on becoming proficient film-based photographers.

Finally, there is a limitation on the application of this study to future high school photography classes when the shift to all digital equipment is complete. This study was a snapshot in time - a phenomenon that is occurring in current high school photography classes. In ten years, there may not be traditional film photography in the high schools, but the overarching issues found in this research could help shape the construction of secondary photo imaging classes for the future.

### Assumptions

There are a few key assumptions for this study:

1. I am operating this study under the theories of adolescent development in which adolescents are concerned with identity formation and their role in the larger world (Erikson, 1968; Sullivan, 1953). Therefore, the curriculum design is developed around these concepts to form the major themes the students will be exploring with their photographs. I define adolescents as being between thirteen and nineteen years old and being enrolled in high school courses.
2. I am presuming that students ages thirteen to nineteen can reflect upon art making and decode visual images through verbal dialogue

and written reflections. These insights into their thinking processes can reflect a sense of growth as photographers.

3. The length of the study is crucial to the curriculum development. Focusing on an entire semester of a course allows for growth of the students' skills, thought processes, and image making to occur.
4. It is assumed that multiple factors including, popular culture, social networking, educational experience, family, peers, and the community in which they live influence students' image making and image analysis.

#### Justification/Summary

I suggest that a more engaged and meaningful approach to photo education for secondary students would be one that places the medium in a social and historical perspective. This is not to say that technical skills are not necessary to impart to students, but photography is a way to define both the individual and social groups (Newbury, 1996) and since the students are of adolescent age, identity and belonging are key in their interests. Students can learn how to critically examine the codes and conventions that have developed in the medium and then reflect on their art making process in order to create connections between their experience and the world. Stanley (2003) defined this engagement as:

the involvement of the self in the processes of reading and making photographs, the identification of the self in the process of producing photographs and consuming them. It is about what

happens when and where the self and the photograph meet. Identification of the self in the process of looking involves understanding how the self is made to look – and how the self is represented (p. 135).

The practice of photography is much more than mechanical concerns. Stanley (2003) argued that rather than focusing on the technical, students tend to treat photography “as a means to an end – producing images that express aspects of themselves in a way they find both pleasing and convincing, and reflective of their engagement with the wider world” (p. 140). With the advent of digital photography, the discourse for photographic imaging has been shifting to accommodate the new technology and its ability to present images in novel ways. The traditional skill-based approach to photo education is in conflict with paradigm of new media theory and the way current students approach technology. This is an ideal time for photo educators to rethink our approach to teaching photography as an art form to secondary students.

In general, there has been little written about the practice of teaching photography. Common curriculum concepts of the medium include photography as a hobby, a commercial advertising form, a way to document historical events, and a capture device for science. All focus on the mechanical aspects of the practice, turning the student into a technician. The overall purpose of photography education for adolescent students is questionable. Quan (1979) argued that:

for the most part, youngsters in secondary and lower grades taking photography will not become specialists in photography, but a knowledge of the photographic symbol system and its unique

abilities to give mimetic form to feelings and its use as a means of reading the social environment mark the study of still photography as an important educational tool (p. 9).

If most students will not become professional photographers, then why do many photography educators teach only the technical aspects of the medium? It is more important to engage these students in the social and contextual aspects of image making. As Newbury (1997) argued:

instead of an emphasis on skills teaching, photography can be used to provide a means of integrating social and cultural concerns within an educational framework...the act of representing oneself, others, and the social world through photography can be argued to be both reflexive and educational (p. 432).

Students deserve to learn how they fit into the larger world, and more importantly, how they can gain social power to achieve their goals.

A connection between photography and “socially relevant art curriculum” has been noted (Giroux, 1992), with most study done in Great Britain in the late 1990s (Newbury, 1996, 1997; Grove-White, 2003; Stanley, 2003).

Empowering students by engaging them in the arts has been a popular issue for some time. Stinson (1983) described three levels of aesthetic experience, the third being the powerful relationship between the observer and the world around him/her. Greene (1995) argued that the arts have the ability to change the way students interact with the world, stirring them into “wide-awakeness”. I feel that the current re-interest in teaching social and historical contexts in art education, added to the revolution of digital technology, has provided the opportunity to revamp photography curriculum for young people.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

*A story is told of a French railroad passenger who, upon learning that his neighbor on the next seat was Picasso, began to grouse and grumble about modern art, saying it was not a faithful representation of reality. Picasso demanded to know what was a faithful representation of reality. The man produced a wallet-sized photo and said, "There! That's a real picture – that's what my wife really looks like." Picasso looked at it carefully from several angles, turning it up and down and sideways and said, "She's awfully small. And flat."*

*- Nachmanovitch, (as cited in Hubbard and Power, 2003).*

#### Justification of Photography as Art

Photographers seem to be in a constant state of defense when talking about their practice. The contradiction that the camera is so accessible to both the everyday person and the artist proves difficult for validation of photography as a fine art. As professional photographers fought to be considered artists in a culturally justifiable practice, companies such as Kodak were developing cameras that allowed anyone to “press the button and [the company] will do the rest”. The possibility of anyone being able to create a photograph with little training poses a problem for photography as fine art. As Pierre Bourdieu (1990) stated,

Unlike more demanding cultural activities such as drawing, painting, or playing a musical instrument, unlike even going to museums or concerts, photography presupposes neither academically communicated culture, nor the apprenticeships and the ‘profession’ which confer the value on the cultural consumptions and practices

ordinarily held to be the most noble, by withholding them from the man on the street. (p. 5).

Discourse in the profession of photography emphasizes the distinction between the professional and the amateur in order to achieve cultural status. There has to be some distinction between the photographs of a professional artist from the amateur hobbyist. Sontag (1977) wrote that:

nothing is more acceptable today than the photographic recycling of reality...yet something about photography still keeps the first-rate professional defensive and hortatory; virtually every important photographer right up to the present has written manifestos and credos expounding photography's moral and aesthetic mission (p. 115)

Throughout the history of photography, there have been some key concepts that have defined photographic practice. Below, I discuss the ideas of: denotation versus connotation, sense of narrative and temporal aspects, social context, currency/value, amateur photographers versus professionals, and the impact of digital technologies. These concepts can help shape approaches to photography course curriculum.

### Denotation versus connotation

Roland Barthes (1982) defined the photograph as having two meanings: the denotation, or representation of the object, and the connotation, or context, of the image. The denotative meaning is completely descriptive, while the connotative meaning is a culturally specific interpretation. There is a paradoxical relationship between the photograph as an object and the photograph as a record of something real.

For example, Barthes presented an advertisement for an Italian food company, Panzani. While the objects of pasta, sauce, and fruits and vegetables are represented, the connotation of the photograph suggests that this food is what Italians deem as high quality and buying these products can allow a person to eat/be like an Italian.

Connotations, or visual codes, are learned through cultural shaping. As we learn to read these codes, we automatically think of the connotation for that symbol in future images at which we look. This process of interpretation is referred to as semiotics, a term defined by Peirce and then later by Saussure and Barthes (Sturken and Cartwright, 2003). In this theory, the signifier is the object represented, while the signified is the meaning or interpretation of the sign. For example, Marlboro cigarette advertising historically used images of cowboys or rugged men in the American West. The signified meaning of individualism and masculinity has proven effective to influence consumers. Gude (2009) argued that artists alter these signifiers by repurposing them in their artwork. She proposes that “in drawing on and contributing to the reservoir of signifiers and significations, the artist maker shapes self and re-shapes the culture, subtly shifting all future use of these signifiers, all future collective meaning making” (p. 9). Connotations are never fixed or static in meaning.

Barthes (1982) further interpreted the connotation of the image as myth, or the hidden rules and conventions that seem to be understood by the larger world, when in fact, these assumptions are only obvious to

certain sections of society. For example, concepts of beauty are very culturally specific, but are not accepted worldwide. When looking again at the example of the food advertisement, a person might question the way that Italians are being presented. The ad becomes a myth, or visual code, of describing the culture of Italy. While a photograph is a static image similar to a painting, it operates more like motion pictures by this use of these implied meanings (Burgin, 2001).

Flusser (2000) described images as screens; they are both a barrier and a window. Sutton elaborated, “the screen contains, frames, or unifies the world (transparency), or reveals itself by reflecting the expectations of culture (objecthood)” (p. 171). The camera can record a piece of the world, but it represents that scene back on a screen or, as Sutton defined, “virtual equivalence” (p. 171). Sontag (1977) proposed the idea that photography is a “trace to the real” (p. 154). She compares the allegory of Plato’s story of the cave, in which people look at the reflected shadows of objects on a wall and believe that what they are seeing is reality. When they venture above ground and actually examine the real world, they are confounded and choose to look again to the shadows on the ground for the truth.

#### Sense of the narrative and temporal

Theorists have also discussed the idea that the still image has a sense of narrative and temporal aspects. Alvarado (1979-80) argued that photographs have an impression of story. While the image is one moment in time, there is a suggestion to the viewer of the events that happened

right before and after the photo was taken. The viewer then can create a narrative about what he or she thinks the larger event was about. This sense of story can highlight the temporal aspect of the image. There is a feeling of capturing a moment in time, especially with historic photos. Sontag (1977) called the act of photography as a way to imprison reality and declared, “all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt” (p. 163). Osborne (2000) further defined the photograph as a way to represent object ideals with a temporal significance.

### Social Context and Value

Photographs are used as a tool to capture family histories and events in our attempts to visually record our narratives. Still imagery is also used to document wars, famine, and social injustices in the world as tools to elicit change for these atrocities. Photographs saturate magazines, web pages, and newspapers; simply put, photography permeates our lives (Newbury, 1997). Because of this saturation of imagery, the nature of the photograph gains relevance from its context (Alvarado, 1979-80). Depending on its use and the way it is presented, a photograph can shift meaning through the context in which it is placed. The viewer also produces his or her own meaning of the image dependant upon their age, gender, sex, and class as well as the political and social aspects of the time (Sturken & Cartwright, 2003).

In the beginnings of photographic practice, the photographer/artist was seen as a scribe, presenting the world as it is. Soon, however, people began to realize that no two take the exact same photograph.

Photographers bring their own perspectives and experiences onto the image, bringing a new definition to *photographic seeing* (Sontag, 1977). They may be unaware of their prejudices or preferences, but their perspectives influence their picture making nonetheless. Minor White (1966) called this being in a blank state of mind, where the creative photographer's mind and eye is sympathetic to discovering a possible photograph.

The photographers' images also reflect the photographers' knowledge and understanding of social and cultural norms. The less they comprehend of society's structure, the more "false consciousness" the image states (Dennett and Spence, 1975). This concept applies to the viewer that examines the images as well; the deeper the understanding comes from a stronger grasp of societal rules. Additionally, each viewer brings his or her own interpretation to the photograph, the dominant views of the culture, which influence the viewer's way of seeing and understanding, tend to shape the meaning. Barthes (1982) called this "hedonistic aesthetics" in which the signifiers of the photograph are put into place by the artist, but the viewer takes these signifiers and re-works them through active engagement into his or her own meaning.

Sontag (1977) discussed the influence of context on photography. She argued that a "photograph is, always, an object in context; this

[original] meaning is bound to drain away” (p. 106). The further removed (in both time and place) the photograph is from its original purpose; the more the meaning is altered. Furthermore, the power of society impacts the act of photography by shaping images to influence people. To reproduce majority ideals, Sontag (1977) declared:

capitalist society requires a culture based on images...to stimulate buying and anesthetize the injuries of class, race, and sex... the camera’s twin capacities, to **subjectivize** reality and to objectify it, ideally serve these needs and strengthen them”(p.178)

Some theorists define photography as currency (Tagg, 1978). The photograph’s value is determined by what the photo recorded and the way in which they are circulated in the public space. Since images can be heavily influenced by the powerful: their value is high because of their ability to alter people’s perceptions of an event or object. For example, during the Great Depression, the Farm and Security Administration photographers were given guidelines as to who and what they should photograph (Tagg, 1978). When originally released to the public, these photographs were defined as authentic images of people who were nobly struggling through this time period. The images brought a sense of hope and dignity to the American people, the most famous image being Dorothea Lange’s *Migrant Mother*. As time went on, the governing agency that produced these portraits admitted that they asked the photographers to look for and represent certain ideals rather than document “the truth”.

### Amateur versus Artist

The ability for both a professional artist and the common man to use the camera as a tool for image-making has been a source of contention for defending photography as a legitimate, high art form. Bourdieu (1990) described photography as a “middle-brow art”, one that lies between amateur and high culture. Starting with the invention of the Brownie, the practice of photography has transformed from an expert-only system to an accessible, but externally controlled one (Burgess, 2006). The Kodak Company gave the everyday person a tool to create images, but created a dependency on the corporation to develop and print their images. Kodak went farther to tell the general public how to take “correct” images in relation to ideals such as modernity and family (Burgess, 2006).

Since cultural forces condition the mass culture of image making, a personal photo is a reflection of a group’s mores, worries, and ideals (Flusser, 2000). For example, a family photo is a tangible artifact, a way for a person to create and place him or herself within society (Sutton, 2007). Moreover, the type of equipment that is available influences the amateur. Determinations of what a consumer market camera can do are decided by the manufacturers (who are also influenced by social and aesthetic norms) and further perpetuate the cultural mean (Sturken & Cartwright, 2003).

Photography allows people to make judgments of what is important, of interest, or is beautiful simply by capturing it in an image (Sontag, 1977). The practice of constructing images gives power to a

person to define his or her world. Photography has a magical quality for people; it has the power to represent reality and capture a sense of mystery at the same time. While most amateur photography has been relegated to the family home or to hobbyist organizations, the advent of digital photography has allowed novice photographers to display their images to a wider audience. As discussed later in this dissertation, the current type of equipment and means of sharing images over the Internet has proven to be a great equalizer between the amateur and the professional photographer.

### Digital Technology

Digital technology has given more power to the photographer in the ease of capturing, creating, and presenting their work. Cameras have gotten faster and can capture vast amounts of information in an image. The latest technology allows for the photographer to shoot in “high-definition” and well as embed their image with a GPS tag that allows the photo to be tagged for location and time it was taken. Cameras now have the capability to shoot both still and moving images, come in a variety of sizes, and are embedded in a variety of equipment, such as cell phones, computers, and gaming devices. Transmission of images is quicker and more democratic than ever; an image of an event captured across the world can be on a person’s computer in seconds. Conflicts, such as skirmishes in the Middle East or China, can be shot by an everyday person

and then sent to a news agency for publication, even though the governments tried censor documentation of the event.

Consumers are more aware of the possible manipulation of images. As discussed before, altering photographs is not a new concept, but one that was secondary to the representation of something real. Now in the digital age, when even a young child can operate a photo editing software, issues of what is real become more apparent. One of the most famous images of debate has been the Newsweek cover photograph of OJ Simpson, which had been altered by the photographer. Using the mug shot that was made of Simpson, the photographer darkened the image, especially Simpson's skin to enhance the idea of being guilty. Protests over representation of an African-American as evil and the ethics of manipulating photographs abounded (Sturken & Cartwright, 2003).

Finally, the pervasiveness of images is astounding. We are constantly confronted by photographs, from an adolescent's collection of digital self-portraits for their social networking page (the "MySpace portrait") to thousands of people sharing images through Flickr© and Facebook©. Web pages, television, the sides of buildings, with each new imaging technology, it becomes easier to display and look at images. Our society has become hyper-visual or more accepting of receiving images at a faster pace. The question arises, however, if we can comprehend the barrage of images we are presented with.

## Future of Photography

The technology of photographic imaging has always been entrenched in controlled tools that were “not hackable” (Burgess, 2006). The tables are now turning; new media technologies are now handing the basic operations to the consumer and allowing them to make the decisions. This allows for the consumer to make the software and equipment work for their purposes, not the purposes that the company assumes the customer would want. The norms of new media literacy operate with users that are active participants in this technology; the users are proactive, learning new skills and approaches to networking. They collaborate with each other using discussion boards and blogs to share and build their knowledge. Practices learned through everyday use of these tools makes the user becomes more intuitive, a practice that Burgess defines as a “user-led content revolution” (p. 1). Amateur photographers have the ability to hone their craft through the ease of communication and dialogue with others. With more interest in the sharing of images, the amateur becomes more engaged with creating more effective images.

Currently, the type of technology that the photograph is created with seems to be not as important as how the image is presented in a context. Even if the image is captured with a more traditional tool, such as a view camera, the photograph frequently ends up in digital form to be displayed and shared with others. Sturken and Cartwright find that “the digital and virtual image gains its value from its accessibility, malleability, and information status” (p. 139). A thread of future concentration for

artists is the trace of the image through technology and form (Antonelli, 2008). The concept of an image having a past and a fluid meaning due to different contexts is an important topic of discussion for conceptual artists today.

The concept of photographic truth is being redefined as new technologies allow the photographer to alter the capture seamlessly. For example, a photographic landscape could be constructed from multiple frames of one scene or a variety of places. Although it looks believable or “truthful”, it cannot be tied to a specific time or place in reality because the artist constructed the landscape. Photojournalism is struggling with the concept of “the truth” in this digital age. Adnan Hajj, a Lebanese photographer, was discovered to have doctored his images of the Lebanese capital after an Israeli air raid in 2007. He added and darkened the smoke in the sky over the city. Once Reuters news agency, who published this image, found out, they quickly withdrew the photograph and fired Hajj.<sup>2</sup>

Looking toward the future, Sturken and Cartwright (2003) state, “image, text, sound, sound, and object also converge on the social production of meaning, and can no longer be studied in isolation” (p. 345). Interpretations of images multiply in possibilities with each partnership with new media technologies. The globalization of media constructs complex power relations in the creation and sharing of images. There will continue to be a shift in the idea of photographic truth and the social and historical meanings of images as new technologies emerge. However, the

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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5254838.stm>

strength and influence of still images will continue to persuade us with their meanings. With this shift in technology, photography finds itself redefining its purpose in postmodern society, creating concern for both the educator and the artist – how does photography practice function in the twenty-first century?

### Overview of Photo Education for Adolescents

As stated before, there is a lack of scholarship on photography education for secondary students, but I will review some larger ideas that are I believe are essential to adolescent photography programs. To start, Stokrocki (1986) noted that adolescent photographers tend to construct stereotypical images that are often center-weighted. She offered suggestions for teaching photography to teenagers that included studying master photographers and offering alternative possibilities for composition and subject matter. Quan (1979) argued that the study of photography is much more than technical concerns. Adolescents can be introduced to photographic inquiry, in which students can analyze their work and the work of others to deduce relationships between themselves and the larger world.

Freire (2005) argued that through photography, students can be taught about class-consciousness and how to gain power in society. As Davidson (2010) contended that, “discussions with respect to the politics of representation, authenticity, and truth related to the photographic image lend additional credence to the argument for turning the camera

over to the subject” (p. 107). Photography is an accessible and powerful tool for students; it allows the beginning photographer to create complex images with little experience or training. Photographs can be combined with text to highlight the power of the narrative and be used for young people to examine their position in the community (Davidson, 2010).

The study of the connotations of photographs is an important part of the curriculum as well. Adolescents need to develop the skills to read the visual codes of images in order to understand what they are looking at and being influenced by. Photography, being a still moment in time, allows for closer examination of these visual messages. Davidson (2010) affirmed that, “in an era when young people are bombarded with fast-paced images, the still photograph continues to offer art educators a means to encourage students to slow down, observe, record, and reflect on their own experience” (p. 108). Photography can enhance the ability to resist and question norms.

Finally, adolescents are comfortable with exploring the new technological practices that are shaping photographic practice. These “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001) are already using photographic techniques in their communication on social networking sites, their gaming play, and their use of image creation software. Students use inductive reasoning to learn new software and technology and tend to be open to exploring the possibilities of the tool, rather than being told what to do. Manovich (2001), in his new media theory, argued that there is “no longer a linear march” to learning, that students now approach acquiring

knowledge in an organic way. With the bombardment of visual imagery combined with young people's fascination with technology, it is imperative that educators give them tools to find meaning within these representations.

Yet, with all these new ways to create images, there is still an enduring power in still photography. Both children and adults are attracted to producing their own version of "the truth" and are drawn to its immediacy and intimacy. As Davidson confirmed, "it is clear that when photography is employed as a form of social reflection, it has the potential to enhance intergenerational and intercultural understanding, to reduce stereotypical attitudes and to celebrate the dreams and ingenuity of youth and other groups whose stories are often lost in the din of our popular media" (p. 112). Command of image making combined with image understanding is a powerful tool to navigate the social and historical norms of society. Photography can be an especially powerful outlet for expression and meaning making for the adolescent student.

### Adolescent Development

The stage of the adolescent is a tumultuous one, a time of transitioning from being a child to being an adult. Both biological and cognitive changes take place during this stage, as a person matures from a child to an adult, however, the construct of the adolescent is a fairly recent social phenomenon and does not extend to all cultures around the globe.

Teenagers want freedom and the recognition that they are close to adulthood, yet they still crave the care and attention of their parents.

Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1986) described adolescents as studies in contrast:

teenagers are maddeningly self-centered, yet capable of impressive feats of altruism. Their attention wanders like a butterfly, yet they can spend hours concentrating on seemingly pointless involvements. They are often lazy and rude, yet, when you least expect it, they can be loving and helpful (p.xiii).

The teenager's pendulum shifts of behavior, although frustrating to teachers and parents, is a normal process that allows the adolescent an opportunity to experiment with a variety of actions. Peers start to become very important in this age - often teenagers consult their friends for advice on academics, future plans, and sexuality (McLean, 2005). The affects of this peer pressure are both positive and negative, depending on the situation. Sullivan (1953), in his Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry, argued that these relationships are paramount to form one's identity. Adolescence is a time where the brain is starting to develop abstract thought, to recast experience, and construct meaning (Graham, 2003, Kroger, 2002).

Some of the early research on identity development uses a biological framework to explain why adolescents behave the way they do. G. Stanley Hall (1844-1924) described these years as a stage of "strum and drang" in which a person has to endure conflict in order to develop as an adult (White, 1990). Piaget (1972) also used biological development to

describe particular cognitive stages a child goes through. The teenager goes from the *Concrete Operational Stage*, in which abstract thinking and rational thought begin, to the *Formal Operational Stage*, in which hypothetical and deductive reasoning are matured. Critics of evolutionary development argue that children don't necessarily move from one to the next stage due to their age. They argue that environmental factors, such as poverty or family structure, can impact mental development. Others advocate for a dual influence of both nature and nurture on child development.

Identity development is a key feature during adolescence. Erikson (1968) describes this stage as *Identity versus Role Confusion*, a time in life at which an individual attempts to define a singular identity. The idea of personal identity is a culturally based phenomenon, in which an independent, autonomous identity is a desired outcome in an American or Western culture (McLean, 2005). In the search to find oneself and a place in the world, a teenager may distance them self for a time from family and friends in order to create a distinction between themselves and others (Kroger, 2004). Some teenagers may experience "role confusion" as they explore possibilities for their future (Erikson, 1968). Marcia (1966) bases his theory of adolescent development on Erikson's work, but further elaborates by defining the ideal of *identity achievement*, a time of crisis and of commitment. A time of crisis can challenge values and choices of a teenager while a commitment is a decision made by the teenager to a particular value or role. Marica defined four stages of identity

development for adolescents; identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement.

Loevinger and Blasi (1976) defined adolescence as a stage in which a person is more self-aware than when he or she were a child and can start comprehending multiple possibilities for situations. Teenagers start to differentiate their sense of self from self-interest and conformity to others to a more complex view of the self as distinct and can work with others in an equal relationship. Identity formation is a lifelong process of meaning making. In the adolescent years, a teenager starts to balance the needs of them self versus the needs of others, gaining perspective in their place in society (Kegan, 1982; McLean, 2005). Finally, Lesko (1996) argued that the time of adolescence is a period of disruption, no matter what the environmental setting. Teenagers are in the between stage of not being children anymore and not quite being adults and thus, feel a sense of uncertainty. Fine (2004) supported this paradigm by stating that an adolescent is “simultaneously adult and childish, and problematic in their boundary crossing” (p.3). This push and pull that adolescents experience makes a socially relevant curriculum a good fit for these students.

### Visual Development of Adolescents

Lowenfeld and Brittain (1982) placed adolescents’ drawing abilities into two stages, *Pseudo-realism* and the *Stage of Decision*. The Pseudo-realism stage typically takes place between the ages of eleven to thirteen. At these ages, children are shifting away from narrative drawings and

focusing on drawing from observation and making their images look three-dimensional and “real”. The *Stage of Decision*, or *Crisis of Adolescence*, to which Lowenfeld and Brittain also referred, occurs between the ages of thirteen to seventeen. Here, the student is still aiming for a more realistic approach to his or her artwork, but may start to create work that focuses on emotional expression or social and political issues. Burton (2001) and Wilson (1997) noted the growing interest in literalism and popular conventions, with the interest in developing three-dimensional reality of utmost importance for older students.

As in their personal development, adolescents’ art making can undergo experimentation while expression may be muted by the self-conscious nature of teenagers as they go through the stage of identity formation. Frustration is also common because the student is trying to search for a way to represent his or her personal ideas and emotions through a visual medium. Furthermore, there is a lack of art opportunities for art making at the high school level as students need to meet academic demands and other responsibilities, while what art courses are available for students are organized around the principle of preparing students for art school. Graham (2003) argued, “adolescent artistry is complex, idiosyncratic, and is manifest in diverse ways. It is influenced by the contexts of visual culture, individual background, instruction, and the social relevance given to art by school and society” (p. 175). Art making during the adolescent stage is a complex phenomenon.

### Meaning Making in Art Education

Art that is meaningful to students is personal in nature. Meaning making, as described by Gude (2008), is the “ability to engage and entertain ideas and images; it is the ability to make use of images and ideas to re-imagine one’s own life experience” (p.101). Anderson (2004) defined it as the ability to “connect ideas and emotions through the physical act of constructing aesthetic forms to represent their meanings” (p.31). Art curriculums that are designed around meaning making tend to be constructivist in approach.

Authentic learning can occur when students make their own connections (Hunter, 1982, Efland, 2002). Erickson (2001) supported using broad, cross-cultural thematic units to build connections between cultures and other subjects; this allows students to relate the visual art lesson to their overall education experience. Roberts (2005), working on the ideas of Walker (2001) provided suggestions to making art projects meaningful to students, which include using big ideas, such as sense of place or controlling nature, to develop projects. Roberts argued that allowing students to struggle with making meaning of these issues within their own lives and visualizing them in their art work allows the students to work both intellectually and intuitively in their art production. A more recent approach to thematic curriculum in visual art has been the Art21 video series. This video series from the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) introduces contemporary art through larger ideas such as power, identity,

and space.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, art educators must provide opportunities for students to experience a deep engagement with the work at hand in order to provide opportunities for “empowered making” (Gude, 2008).

Adolescence is a key time to focus on meaning-making opportunities as this age group is starting to construct their life stories through connecting their experiences to their self-identity (McLean, 2005).

With postmodern art and imagery, meaning making happens within a socially constructed space (Morely, 1992). It is within this context that cultural and personal meanings are created. Elements of education, socioeconomics, and popular culture all affect these constructions. Images, especially photographs, have multiple levels of meaning embedded within them or as Barrett (1990) stated, they are “visual metaphors that have levels of meaning; what is shown and what is implied” (p.35). In the contemporary art classroom, teachers must give their students the skills to critically analyze, not just consume, these images (Sturken and Cartwright, 2003; Freedman, 1997).

### Social Justice Concepts

Although John Dewey produced his writing of education in the early to mid 1900s, his work still resonates with educational practitioners today. Dewey (1899) advocated for schools to be places that support critical thinking rather than rote learning and the memorization of facts.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/art21/education/index.html>

Dewey (1934) suggested that the arts offer students a way to think mindfully through questions as they come about. He supports the need for arts in the schools as ways to break through the monotony of convention.

Dewey (1934) stated:

the function of art has always been to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness...artists have always been the real purveyors of news, for it is not the outward happening in itself which is new, but the kindling by it of emotion, perception, and appreciation (p. 183-4).

Using the art curriculum as a means to building students' perceptions and reflective skills, where students can become interpreters of their own world, schools can create engaged citizens in a democratic society (Dewey, 1916).

Maxine Greene continually promotes the arts in education in her work as a way to foster empowerment for students. A more contemporary advocate for social justice, Greene (2000) argued for a new approach to public education. Greene called for building communities in classrooms, where students can develop relationships and understanding with each other – a model for how they could be empathetic, aware adults in the world. She highlighted the need for student imagination to be nurtured in the schools to offset the stress on academic standards and accountability that is prevalent in education today. She also emphasized the need for teaching critical awareness, “in noticing what there is to be noticed” (p. 277). Having authentic experiences with the arts can give students a way to learn how to question and critically examine their world.

In their book, *Democratic Schools* (1995), Apple and Beane stated that curriculum developed outside the classroom, without the input of teachers and students is undemocratic. Classrooms should be set up as places of equity, with the teacher no longer the transmitter of knowledge, but a facilitator to help guide students in a critical look at the issues at hand. Examining social action as public pedagogy, Schultz, Baricovich, and McSurley (2010) declared that there is a “severe lack of engaging curricula promoting such democratic decision-making and authentic problem solving” (p. 369). They define a social action curriculum project (SACP) as one that allows the students and teachers to decide what topics are important and pertinent to study. This approach provides students with the chance to question the predominant norms in society and the ability for “learning to be an enriching and invigorating space” (p. 370).

Two theorists who take social justice to an extreme political level are Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux. Freire, in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), defined education as a political arena, where the powerful oppress all others. He identified people as subjects who can act on and transform their world to lead a “fuller and richer” life (p. 32). Through dialogic conversation with others, people can critically examine the world around them and enact change. Education, then, is a partnership between the teacher and his or her students, reversing the notion of what Freire called the “banking system” of schooling in which teachers impart knowledge onto students. Giroux (2006) commented on public pedagogy by remarking on the invasive nature of imagery through

the television, print media, films, and the Internet. He positions that “schools have to rethink what it means to educate young people to live in a world dominated by entirely new modes of information, communication, and cultural production” (p. 6).

In the recent book, *Art Education for Social Justice* (2010), Tom Anderson stated that “art education for social justice...centers art forms, visual artifacts, performances, and educational activities that encourage social equity and the opportunity for all people to achieve their vocational, professional, personal, social, and economic goals in the world” (p.5). He further elaborated that a social justice approach can potentially provide a more equal opportunity in society for all people, not just the advantaged. Social justice art education takes art beyond decoration for its own sake to a perspective that art must be about and for something. He pointed to scholars, such as Desai and Chalmers (2007), Pistoletti (2007), and Gude (2007) who advocate for a theme-based approach to art education – one that examines social issues through larger ideas such as peace or community. Stuhr (2003) defined this approach as “the investigation of social and cultural issues from multiple personal, local, national, and global perspectives” (p. 303). Gude (2009) argued that “telling one’s story...through the process of making and re-making the story, the image – the student/artist/maker makes self” (p. 8). Gude further defined quality art education as a way to develop “individuals who have the propensities and skills to form communities of discourse, spaces of shared and contested meaning” (p. 10).

A theme to emerge from the art education field is the focus of multiculturalism. Chalmers argued for a need to shift from “celebratory” to “critical” multicultural art education in a response to globalization and trans-cultural migratory phenomenon (p. 293). Chalmers believed that multiculturalism naturally has social justice issues embedded within it and that the fluctuating nature of cultures, rather than a fixed view, needs to be examined in the curriculum. Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, and Stuhr (2010) argued, “good curricula and teaching, particularly in the area of multiculturalism, should connect with the students’ narratives, needs, experiences, and communities” (p. 15). The curriculum should be driven by an overarching question, such as national identity or stereotypes. Students should be able to see how the learning connects with their personal lives and the world at large. Using the idea of a classroom as a model for a democratic society, students can explore the complexity of social issues, especially the inclusion and exclusion of groups of people (Desai, 2005).

Another theme that winds through a social justice curriculum is visual culture. Tavin (2010) argued that teaching about and critically learning through public pedagogy offers opportunities to work toward critical citizenship, where students see themselves as agents of change (p.435). Desai and Chalmers (2007) argued for two concepts to help structure the social justice curriculum:

- 1) understanding the politics of images – that is the way images circulate within and across societies and construct meanings about

the world in particular ways, and 2) aesthetics needs to be understood as relational or dialogic (p. 8).

They support their stance by using the theory that images have power to influence and shape our perceptions of the subject at hand. Stokrocki (2010) worked with a middle school classroom teacher to create a critical examination of morality in *The Simpsons* television show. She argued that teaching children how to critically analyze popular culture can expand the students' understanding of deeper social issues. Darts (2006) advocated for a curriculum designed to meet current art practices, student interests, and the context and politics of imagery.

#### Conflicts in the Schools with Teaching a Social Justice Paradigm

There is debate within art education (and education in general) about approaching curriculum with a social justice viewpoint. Scholarship on the theories of social justice paradigms and case studies of after-school or community program are easy to find, however, studies within the public schools on sustained efforts in social justice are more difficult to collect (Chalmers, 2002). One reason, as Desai and Chalmers (2007) stated, may be that art educators have resisted changing art criticism from “both ‘expert’ judgment and disengaged engagement with form rather than content” (p. 9). This disengagement allows the teacher and students to examine art from a safe distance – to not risk issues of a political nature.

Pistolessi (2007) stated that trying to teach a dynamic, dialogic social justice curriculum in schools today is “like walking on eggshells” (p.

21). She suggested that art educators are bound by censorship of the school and the parent community to not approach sensitive topics. Stuhr (2003) noted that even if pre-service teachers are prepared in their university courses to include social justice perspectives, they tend to conform to the traditional school culture when they start teaching. Ward (2005) called a social justice approach in the secondary schools as “guerilla teaching”, a spontaneous approach that is directed wherever the students’ interests lie.

A major critic of social justice in art education is Michelle Marder Kamhi (2010) who argued that:

If the hijacking of art education by ‘social justice’ and ‘visual culture’ advocates prevails, students will be disserved in multiple ways. They will not only be politically indoctrinated, in a context relatively insulated from opposing views. They will also be more and more deprived of the truly humanizing experiences that the making and appreciation of *art* can provide--art dealing not just with issues of social justice but with the myriad other themes of personal and social significance that art everywhere has always been concerned with. <sup>4</sup>

Her opposition to social justice issues in the art education arena has sparked much debate over this matter.

### Social Justice in a Photography curriculum

Using the media of photography can provide a way to provide meaningful art making experiences to young people. Chio & Fandt (2007) suggested that:

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<sup>4</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.aristos.org/aris-10/hijacking.htm>

the process of taking, sharing, and 'talking' photographs simultaneously acknowledges the presence of self while reducing the potentially emotional and threatening act of having to share this self with others as the medium of photography allows them to self-reveal in an indirect manner (p. 488).

As well as learning the skills and techniques to capture images, critically analyzing the images for meaning can provide for deeper understanding of the self and others. For example, the program entitled *PhotoVoice*, developed by Wang and Burris, uses photography to encourage the use of documentary projects that enable those that have traditionally been the subject of such work to become its creator - to have control over how they are perceived by the rest of the world, while simultaneously learning a new skill which can enhance their lives (Wang & Burris, 1997). They contend that, "the opportunities for collective configuration of themes, small group discussion, and requirements for critical reflection and dialogue...[can] create an important pedagogical space to include a heightened 'consciousness of self' into the learning process" (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 489).

Lovett (2006) described the impact of using still images to reflect on one's experience. In her case study, she examined how adolescents created meaning through a media arts production program. While they worked through issues of identity and community, students created journals, collages, photographs, and video interviews. Lovett looked at the concepts of out-of-school learning, how students create meaning from popular culture, and how students use media technology to examine

critical issues in their lives. One of the aspects that Lovett discovered was the necessity for students to take time to engage in the analysis of images.

She stated:

when someone asks us (or we ask ourselves) what we see, the moment is captured – ‘frozen’ – and available to be used in making more meaningful connections to our world (p. 187).

Lovett advocated for the use of popular culture and the social and cultural contexts of students to connect learning to the students’ lives.

Davidson (2010) illustrated a case study in which she taught documentary photography practice to elementary school children. She states that the medium of photography allows the photographer to capture and bring importance to scenes of everyday life, thus empowering the photographer to tell his or her own stories. Davidson had the students capture images of their families and communities and then had the students write narratives to be paired with the images. The images and text were then presented in several exhibitions and the viewers were then asked to share their stories and responses to the work. Davidson reflected that “when photography is employed as a form of social reflection it has the potential to enhance intergenerational and intercultural understanding, to reduce stereotypical attitudes and to celebrate the dreams and ingenuity of youth and other groups whose stories are often lost in the din of our popular media” (p. 112). Davidson comes to the

conclusion that students have powerful experiences using photography to document and reflect upon their world.

### History of Photography Programs With Social Justice Paradigms

There are many non-profit organizations that teach photography to with minority youth and ethnic groups across the world. Most have similar ideals of empowering participants with the skills and communication opportunities of photography and filmmaking. These images are displayed through the Internet and in galleries to educate the public about the artists' world with the hope that the viewer will become interested in helping aid the situation of these minority populations. Below are three examples of different programs that currently exist today.

One of the first programs that was developed to use photography to empower disadvantaged youth was created by Wendy Ewald. Ewald first started working with Naskapi and MicMac Native children in Canada, teaching them photography skills in the mid 1970s. By 1989, Ewald developed her *Literacy through Photography* program in both Houston and Durham (Ewald & Lightfoot, 2001). The program is designed to promote literacy through the production of photographs. Currently, she is the Project Director of the *Literacy through Photography* program at Duke University, where multiple photography-based programs are being supported.

Another program that uses photography as a means of communication is *Shooting Back*, led by Jim Hubbard. In 1989, he started

teaching homeless children in Washington D.C. how to use a camera and collected their images for a book titled, *Shooting Back*. Hubbard, just as Ewald, believes that photography can give children power over their situation by visually “speaking” about their experiences (1991). Currently, he is the Creative Director for *VeniceArts*, a Los Angeles based non-profit organization which works with disadvantaged youth to teach them photography and filmmaking. The organization believes that through teaching art-based skills, children will strengthen their sense of motivation and self-efficacy, as well as build relationships between the child and their community.

Lastly, a photography program for underprivileged youth is *Kids with Cameras*<sup>5</sup>, founded by Zana Briski in 2002 during her work in Calcutta, India with the children of prostitutes. This organization works with disadvantaged children around the world, such as Palestinian and Israeli children in Jerusalem, child domestic workers in Haiti and the garbage collecting community in Cairo. The children’s photographs are sold to the general public and proceeds go to assist in their school and work training costs. The Academy Award winning documentary film, *Born Into Brothels*, about Briski’s work in Calcutta brought positive media attention to this program and it continues to aid the original children in their schooling.

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<sup>5</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.kids-with-cameras.org/aboutus/>

## Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed some major theories in the medium of photography, highlighted some key aspects of photography education for adolescents, defined the developmental and artistic stages of teenagers, and considered the concepts of school art, meaning making, and social justice approaches in art education. Due to the highly technical nature of the medium, photography educators have traditionally focused on skill acquisition for their students, however, key concepts such as denotation and connotation, sense of narrative, social context, and social value can be included in the curriculum to provide a richer learning experience for the student. Since adolescent students are developing abstract thinking processes and invested in forming their adult identities, using some of these photographic theories in a secondary photography curriculum is a possibility. Additionally, a focus on meaning making and social justice concepts can enhance photography curriculums by providing personal and contextual connections to the students' learning.

### Chapter 3

## METHODOLOGY

*“We have to understand the significance of what we see, hear, and touch.”*

- John Dewey (1938, p. 68)

For this study, I chose to center my research on my own classroom, focusing on creating authentic learning experiences for my students. I developed a new curriculum that focused on incorporating social and historical approaches to photography, which I believed would be intriguing and essential to adolescent photography practice. Throughout the semester, I surveyed the students to identify what parts of the curriculum were engaging to them and modified the original course outline to balance their wants with my own philosophy of essential skills in photo imaging and the school district’s objectives for the beginning photo course. Data was collected through surveys, student artwork, student reflections, field notes, interviews (students and three photo imaging teachers), and observations. This chapter outlines the overlying research methodologies, procedures and types of data collection, the setting and participants, and data analysis.

## Action Research and Grounded Theory

Kurt Lewin (1947) defined the term, *action research* as a new approach for social research; it combines theory with change, allowing the researcher to act upon the social system he or she is studying. For education, an action research paradigm is one that aims to improve practice through reflective study. There are multiple terms used interchangeably for this type of action research: reflective teaching, teacher-as-researcher, teaching as inquiry, and critical praxis (May, 1997). Schon (1983) defined reflective teaching as *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. The first is a response in the middle of the action, while the second is about thinking through thoughts and reflections after the action has happened. Schon argued that a reflective teacher is more successful in his or her practice; the more educators pay attention to their actions, the more effective they can be.

Lankshear and Knoble (2004) suggested that action researchers move through three moments. The first moment is the realization that an event, an experience, or a reading resonates with a person, the second moment is the research process, and the final moment is a period of reflection. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) defined action research as a *self reflective spiral* in which the process starts with planning, acting, observing, and reflecting and then repeats itself as many times as needed. This process is cyclical due to additional questions that emerge as the research is critically analyzed. Fischer (2001) defines four general types of

teacher research: examining how students learn, curriculum innovation, analyzing teacher practice, and finding meaning and connection in one's teaching.

Teachers, rather than an outsider, conduct action research in the classroom. The results are often geared toward that particular case study; thus, generalizations to a larger population are often not as essential. Dewey (1929) advocated that teachers should be the center of educational research. He states, "each day of teaching ought to enable a teacher to revise and better ...the objectives aimed at in previous work. Education is a mode of life, of action" (p. 74). Eisner (1985) argued that teachers have unique knowledge to create theory about the practice of teaching, but they must have a solid understanding of teaching pedagogy to find the noteworthy moments in their classrooms. One of the most powerful aspects of action research is that it provides ownership of the research to the teacher – his or her own voice finding meaning and connections in what they do. To start the process, Hubbard and Power (2003) offered three suggestions for the teacher-researcher: 1) understand that students and communities offer a wealth of information, 2) approach teaching with inquiry, and 3) share findings with other teachers. A small group of teachers, a school faculty, or a researcher and teacher can work together to enact change in collaborative action research (Gordon, 2008). Collaboration allows for support and accountability during the research process.

Studying the classroom phenomenon is a common way to work in an action-based paradigm; however, Lankshear and Knobel (2004) argued that:

teachers may learn much of value for informing and guiding their current practice by investigating historical, anthropological, sociological, or psychological studies and theoretical work conducted in other places and/or other times (p. 7).

In this vein of action research, the comparison of one's experience with others can be a way to make connections and find deeper meanings (Fischer, 2001). The focus could also be of the educator examining his or her professional identity. As Fischer stated:

teacher action research is our personal narrative of our life's work, our personal and shared vision of what schools can be, and our moral dedication to improving our profession and society (47).

Narratives are a powerful way to share educator's knowledge about the classroom. Narratives can tell teachers about their struggle for meaning and connectedness that they seek in our practice (Hobson, 2001). Apple (1993) noted that teachers are embedded in the issues of the classroom and can examine them in an "organic" way by looking at histories of themselves and their students. Using narrative research can allow for multiple overlapping dialogues to be heard (Elbaz-Luwisch, Moen, Gudmundsdottir, 2002). Heikkinen (2002) suggested that action research is personal and should include elements of autoethnography and other narrative forms of writing. Heikkinen also advocated for the use of student writing as a collaborative and participatory method to gain

understanding. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) further defined action research as involving:

a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (p. 2).

Another way to work in action research is to focus on an ethnographic methodology. Ethnography is a type of inquiry that examines a situation through the participants' points of view (Stokrocki, 1997). Desai (2002) suggested that:

doing ethnography requires us to focus on the specific relationship between the narrated experiences of the people we interview, our interpretation of these stories and the ways we choose to represent their experiences through art as always historically contingent (p. 321).

Using an ethnographic approach can give voice to our students' stories and allow us to "see" what how our students view us as we examine our classroom practice.

### Action Research in Art Education

May (1993) offered six major assumptions when using an action research methodology in the art classroom: 1) teachers theorize, 2) action research is not always aimed at problem solving, 3) one doesn't have to be an art teacher to engage in action research, 4) methods matter, 5) collaborations with other teachers can be beneficial, and 6) changes toward social equity are possible. May wrote:

“in art education, the subjects we teach and those who teach and learn have long been marginalized and de-centered in our collective institutional press to “get the job done”. Inquiry into our own practice centers us, grounds us viscerally in real place and time with real persons, begs our questions and possibilities, makes us responsible for what we believe and do. When done well, teaching as inquiry provokes our most aesthetic, pedagogical sensibilities. It helps us to envision and craft ourselves and our work” (p. 124).

Action research in an art classroom allows for collaboration between the teacher and the students, where the students are fully informed by the research questions and can act as critical informants (Corcoran and Sim, 2009). Diket (1997) warned that educators that working in isolation and passively allowing the decision-making about the teaching practice to come from outside the classroom will weaken the professional identity of teachers. She argued for teachers to become researchers within their own classroom and start contributing to the knowledge of art education, thus gaining power over their practice.

Both art and teaching can be considered research as artists and teachers undergo similar reflection processes about their work (Rasanen, 2005). The positions of artist, teacher, and researcher overlap and become complicated, but as Rasanen stated that, “different ways of knowing can support us in the quest to understand and transform reality” (p. 63). Artistic action research can free the teacher to be more creative in his or her visualization and analysis of the data. The final product of an action research study in an art classroom can be multimodal and dynamic. Using photographs, student artwork, audio recordings, video clips, and personal reflections can create a complex and rich presentation of the

phenomenon. Wilson McKay (2006) suggested that “linking hypertext to action research ensures that the process of its construction will yield rich and varied data”, therefore, “the ways the data are arranged and interpreted will function as a forum for the intersection of voices that do not normally intersect resulting in new kinds of seeing as it pertains to learning in art” (p. 50). Our artistic practice can enhance reflective inquiry into our teaching profession.

### Grounded Theory and Interpretation

In qualitative research, a grounded theory approach is an inductive method in which the themes emerge from the data that is gathered. This is in contrast with traditional empirical research that starts with a theory first and then analyzes the data deductively. Using grounded theory in the art classroom is an ideal way to study classroom practice. As Pitri (2006) suggested, “as educators, we can never be entirely certain what ideas will crop up in the art classroom or when they will appear” (p. 43). Emergent curriculum approaches encourages data collection methods such as art teacher-researcher participant observation, interviewing children, and analyzing their artworks (p. 44).

In qualitative methodology, observations, field notes, and interviews often serve as data. Researchers who use a grounded theory method discover categories through open coding, a system that identifies, names, and categorizes themes found in the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Research questions tend to be open or loose in order to account for

the emergent theory. Data analysis is an on-going process, so that the researcher may deepen his or her understanding of the themes that materialize as the study occurs. Saturation occurs when collecting data no longer provides new insights to the interpretation.

During the entire research process, the data is being analyzed and interpreted for meaning. Interpretation is a “process of translation” in which multiple meanings are understood (Stokrocki, 1997). Meanings are placed within their context, giving the reader a sense of what is happening in the phenomenon (Eisner, 1991). Interpretation starts with the collection of data by the researcher as he or she consistently question what they are seeing. Elucidation is subjective to the researcher’s perspective; thus, constantly checking findings with other research and viewpoints diminishes the subjectivity. Because cultures are not static experiences, an interpretation is a snapshot in time. Maitland-Gholson and Ettinger (1994) suggested four aspects of interpretation: finding meanings from participants’ words and behaviors, revealing norms and biases, discovering patterns of power structures, and discerning changing beliefs in the system.

### Issues in Using an Action Research Paradigm

There are critics of the action research paradigm. Patton (2002) described why teacher research is still considered of lower value than university research. He wrote:

On the whole, within universities and among scholars, that status hierarchy in science attributes the highest status to basic research...and virtually no status to formative and action research. The status hierarchy is reversed in real-world settings, where people with problems attribute the greatest significance to action and formative research that can help them solve their problems in a timely way (p. 223).

Stout (2006) defended the validity of action research as a positive force of transformation in the classroom. She stated:

as a form of change orientated inquiry, classroom action research contends with the same critiques as its sisters, while at the same time, having detractors all its own. From reductionists: It's just what teachers do, the common sense work of the classroom. It's not basic research, it's applied, not theory driven. At worst, it's political. Dismissed: It's colloquial – the inopportune stepchild of the real thing (p. 195).

The oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) is another matter to consider. Sanders and Ballengee-Morris (2008) warned that teachers who are working under a university program may have difficulty gaining IRB approval for their study with children. They argued that the overarching IRB design, based on biomedical-based human subject research standards, impedes social science studies, stating, “the movement of both IRB restrictiveness and national research agendas appears to be adversely impacting some of the most vulnerable subjects these policies were intended to protect” (p. 323). While the IRB has no control over a K-12 teacher conducting research in her classroom for her own use, the issue of sharing the newfound knowledge in a larger scholarly arena is tricky.

Finally, the ethical problem of being responsible for student learning and well-being comes into play. Teachers' primary obligations are

to their students, but a researcher's focus is on this or her study, therefore, classroom teachers who engaged in research may find themselves in a "dual-role conflict" (Hammack, 1997). All researchers must be sensitive to the trust of their participants, especially educators, who are responsible for the intellectual, emotional, and physical safety of their students. Children, who are required by law to attend school, need to be protected.

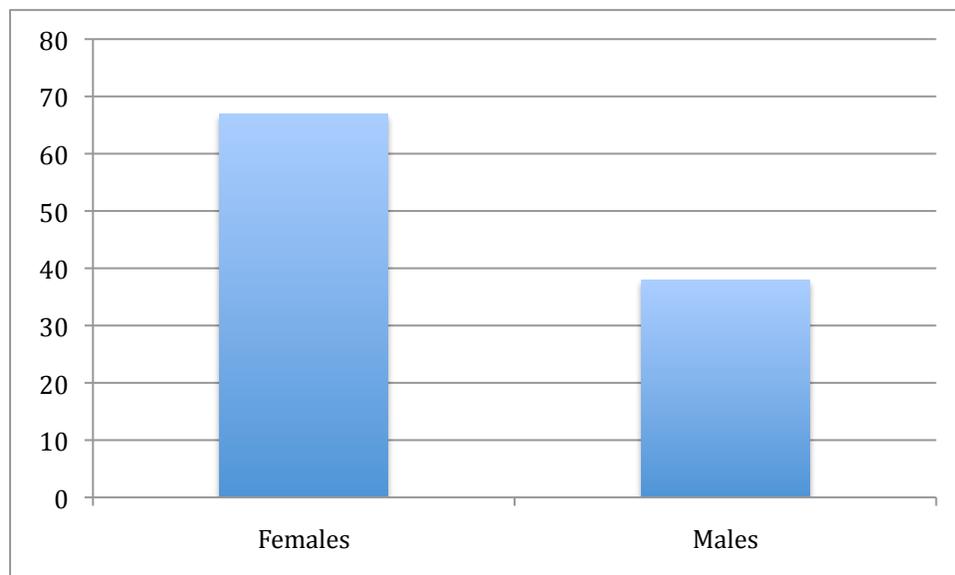
Participants' identities need to be guarded and all voices within the study need to be depicted honestly. Relationships with colleagues and administrators need to be taken into consideration, especially when the data yields information that may be negative or counter the valued norms of the school. Furthermore, Hammack argued: "the potential for ethical problems is exacerbated as a result of the development of nontraditional research methodologies that seek to break down the distinction between researcher and practitioner and subject" (255). Collecting student artwork, journal entries, photographs, and video all create the potential to destroy anonymity of the children in the study. Schulman (1990) suggested incorporating the creation of "stories" that tell of the "wisdom of practice" rather than using specific examples from the data.

### Participants

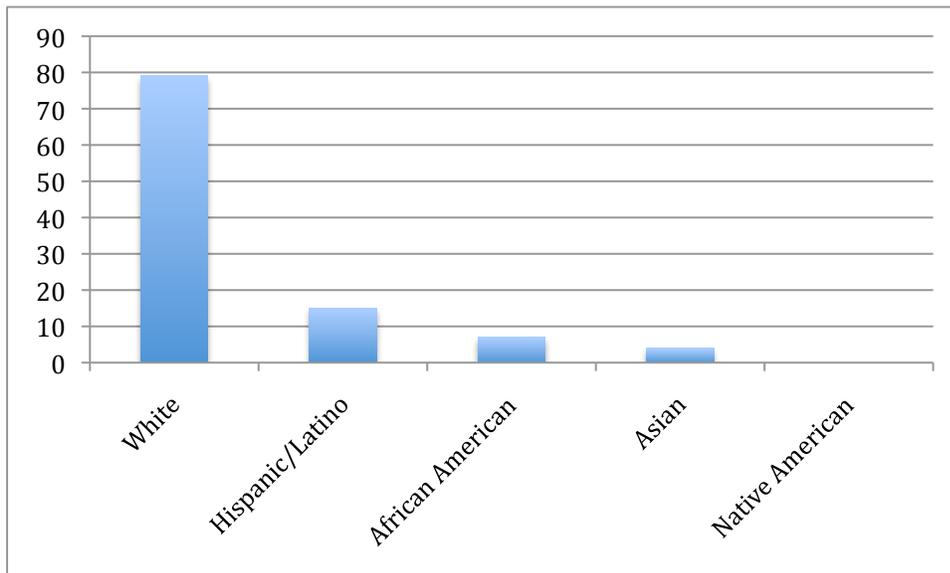
This study took place in a high school that resides in a suburb of Phoenix, Arizona. Permission for this study was obtained first from the principal of the school and then from the school district (see Appendix A, *IRB Approval*). The students in this research were the teenagers who were

enrolled in the Photo Imaging I course at the high school. At the beginning of the semester, parents and students were first introduced to the dissertation study at Open House night, with added information given during the first week of school. All but three students returned their permission slips with both their assent and their parents' consent. Five students opted out of one-on-one interviewing with the teacher.

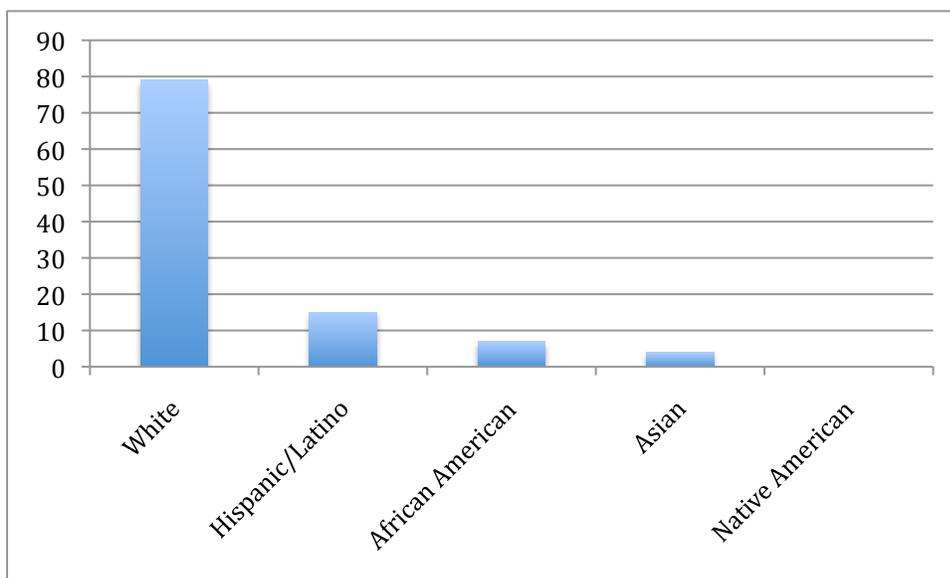
The one hundred and five students, who participated in the study, range in age from fourteen to eighteen, with sixty-seven females and thirty-eight males (see Table 3.1). The ethnic breakdown for the group of participants was seventy-nine Caucasians, fifteen Hispanics, seven African Americans, and four Asians. There were no Native Americans in this study (see Table 3.2). All four grades were represented in the study, with thirty-nine freshman, twenty-three sophomores, sixteen juniors, and twenty-seven seniors in the four photography classes (see Table 3.3).



*Table 3.1 Gender breakdowns of student participants*



*Table 3.2 Ethnic breakdowns of Student Participants*



*Table 3.3 Number of Student Participants by Grade Level*

The Photo Imaging I course met everyday for the eighteen week fall semester. Each class session was fifty minutes in length, with the exception of a handful of half-day and pep assembly schedules. The overall operations of the class were similar to years past; equipment use, camera checkout, and use of the room space were not altered from previous years' procedures. A major change for this school year is the lack of another photography teacher who used the classroom space during my lunch and prep hour times. The second photography teacher position was eliminated for the year due to severe budget cuts within the school district.

Student responses and artwork, once scored for grading, were coded for confidentiality as well as the identities of teachers who agreed to be interviewed. I have used pseudonyms when necessary in this study. Although I feel confident that readers outside of the school district will not be able to identify the school or students, the members of this school community may be able to recognize the classes and its students, mainly due to the use of the student participant and their friends' likenesses in the photographs created for the projects. There may be a chance that some students might post their images on a social networking site such as Facebook® or Flickr®.

### Course Design

The Photo Imaging I course for this school is the original photography class offered in the school district. Since its conception,

other photo courses have been offered to supplement this course: Photo Imaging II, III, and IV, Photojournalism, and Digital Photography I, II, III, and IV. This school also offers students Advanced Placement Studio Art in which an advanced photography student can complete the 2D Design portfolio for the College Board Exam. Photo Imaging I is designed to teach beginning 35mm film camera film and printing techniques, however, some digital technology has crept into the program due to each school's equipment; some newer high schools have a larger digital lab space than darkroom space, thus, they tend to focus on Photoshop and digital camera skills and place a secondary emphasis on the traditional film objectives. The newest high school in the district does not even offer film courses since the district, upon researching the severe reduction in film photography use, decided not to build a wet lab in the school.

There is a brief course description for Photo Imaging I (as stated in Chapter One) as well as a set of standard objectives for the class (see Appendix B, *District Course Objectives for Photo Imaging I*). There is also a district final exam that is given at the end of the semester and calculated in the student's grade. The final exam covers the majority of objectives for the course, placing emphasis on technical skill acquisition such as camera operations, film developing technique, and aspects of print development. The photography teachers employed in the district wrote the three design elements for the course (the description, objectives, and final exam). Furthermore, some teachers, who are certified CTE teachers,

follow the Arizona CTE objectives<sup>6</sup>. These teachers must cover the additional objectives for vocational standards on top of the district requirements. This creates a slight dichotomy in the teaching of photography: some teachers are focusing on skill acquisition and career preparation under CTE guidelines, some are teaching the course using an art education philosophy of nurturing artistic practice, and the rest are trying to provide a combination of both.

### Data Sources and Collection

As previously stated, I collected the following types of data:

- Visual evidence - studio assignments (student photographs), contact sheets, sketchbooks, and photographs of the classes
- Verbal Perspectives - Student participant and photography teacher interviews
- Written Perspectives – students’ reflections on their artwork and prompt responses written in their journals
- Survey Responses – curriculum design check surveys
- Observations – participant-observer field notes on class critiques, discussions, and class sessions

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<sup>6</sup> The Arizona CTE Objectives for Photo Imaging can be accessed at: [http://www.aztechprep.org/CTE\\_Programs/Career\\_Prep/Graphic\\_Comm/photo\\_image.html](http://www.aztechprep.org/CTE_Programs/Career_Prep/Graphic_Comm/photo_image.html)

Visual Artifacts	Interviews	Student Writings	Survey Responses	Field Observations
Studio Assignments	Student Participants	Reflections on Student Artwork	Curriculum Design Checks	Critiques Class sessions
Contact Sheets	Teacher Participants	Prompt Responses		Informal Observations
Sketchbooks				Class discussions
Photographs of classes				

Table 3.4 *Types of Information Collected and Categorized*

Data collection began after the permission forms were turned in. I started with collecting journal responses and observing the students' actions during the first project. At the end of each school day, I created field notes on what major events happened during the classes. Special notation was made for any unusual events or comments that occurred that day.

Artwork and reflection samples were collected from each class and scanned into the computer. I interviewed several students and teachers toward the end of the semester when I felt I had gained a strong perspective on how the course was going (see Appendix C, *Sample Student Interview Questions* and Appendix D, *Sample Teacher Interview Questions*).

### Data Analysis

The duality of being the teacher and a researcher came into play immediately at the start of the study. My responsibilities to my students

versus the need for data collection were sometimes at odds; I often found myself torn between collecting data and managing my classroom for successful learning. There were times where I held back and let the students struggle through the learning process in order to see what would happen, rather than stepping in and altering the original assignment. I found the lofty ideals of research come into conflict with the realities of teaching teenagers quite a bit; the linear march of a study does not always work well in a complex, emotional classroom of adolescents, who, on some days, were so distracted by outside events (pep assembly, half day, holiday, family issues, etc.) that they could not focus on their photography coursework. This lack of attention made it difficult for data collection at times and the data does reflect the reality of teaching in a public high school where distractions abound.

Data analysis occurred in the following ways:

*Visual Artifacts.* When I evaluated the assignments for grading purposes, I made a conscious attempt to look for artwork and responses that had a unique perspective or response on the project. To reduce bias, I attempted to choose projects from both female and male students as well as from students who display varying levels of achievement. These examples were scanned into the computer for sorting and categorizing at a later date. Each image was analyzed against other images from the same assignment and then against all the projects. The written responses and

contact sheets that accompanied the student photographs were used as support evidence of the student's intention in creating the image.

Additionally, I took photographs during the semester of the classroom as well as the classes as they worked within the space. These photos aided in describing the environment and were compared with findings from the student interviews and survey responses for validity of themes.

*Interviews.* Student and teacher interviews took place toward the end of the semester. I made the choice to interview the participants in the last part of the semester because I felt that I needed time to discover themes and attitudes about the class before I could ask anyone what they thought of the new curriculum. I also felt that the students, who had never taken a photography class before, needed time to experience the practice of photography before they could gain perspective on it. Student interviews were conducted to gather additional information on how the students use photography in their lives, what they thought of the course, and if they internalized the social and historical issues we covered. Teacher interviews were conducted to gather outside perspectives on teaching secondary photography curriculum. The teachers who were selected have taught high school photography courses for a number of years; two of the teachers were trained as fine art photographers in the heyday of film-based photography and the third teacher was trained as an art educator in the past decade. For both types of interviews, I constructed

a basic list of questions with which to start each interview, but then expanded on these depending on the responses and information that was shared. The student and teacher interviews, once transcribed, were analyzed for reoccurring themes and perspectives.

Small group interviews occurred during the last week of the semester. I organized the classes into small groups of three to four people and gave them a list of questions to answer as a group (see Appendix E, *Sample of Comments From End of Study Student Interview*). After a period of ten minutes within their group, the students were asked to return their focus back to the class and I asked for groups to share some of their insights. As a class, we discussed topics that occurred repeatedly and asked for any further comments about the curriculum and the course. I compared these small group interviews with the individual student interviews and the survey responses to strengthen the understanding of student engagement in the class.

*Student Writings.* I required students to write a short passage about each of their projects. These texts were usually five sentences long and described what their project was and how they hoped a viewer would understand their images. These statements were with the students' images. I then collected projects that reflected a complex or unique thought process to analyze for reoccurring themes.

Students also answered an evaluation sheet for each project (see Appendix F, *Sample Student Evaluation Sheet*). The questions included:

- What aspects of the theme did you focus on?
- How did you show this idea in your images?
- Explain how you used [camera technique] to create interesting images?
- What do you hope viewers will understand when they look at your images?
- Other than becoming a better photographer, what did you learn from creating your images?

These evaluation sheets were collected by myself for analysis and examined for originality and complexity of responses. Finally, students completed journal entries to reveal their thoughts about photography and pre-visualization of their project ideas. These journals were collected by myself multiple times during the semester and examined for common themes.

*Survey Responses.* I composed a survey for the students to get a base understanding of how the students thought about the quality of the curriculum and the course in general (see Appendix G, *Summary of Curriculum Check #1 Given to Students* and Appendix H, *Summary of Curriculum Check #2 Given to Students*). This survey was given out three times during the semester – at the nine-week mark, the thirteen-week mark, and the eighteen-week mark. Each survey was slightly altered to fit the assignment at the time. I classified answers by quantity of how many students checked each box or by categorizing the open responses using coding techniques. Answers that asked for a particular feeling were organized by number of responses and open-ended questions were separated by reoccurring themes.

*Field Observations.* I found myself taking quick shorthand notes during the day and completing my field notes after the school day was done because I needed to complete the activities of teaching. These field notes became a cathartic process, especially after a frustrating day of dealing with worn-out equipment, overcrowded classes, and misbehaviors of students. Writing my observations at the end of the day allowed me to reflect and analyze the events and behaviors as a whole and helped me make connections and create categories for further analysis. I used these field notes as a chronological aid; providing details about major events and phenomenon happening within the classroom and allowing me to reflect on my teaching practice and bias during the study.

### Validity and Reliability

Since this study is qualitative based, I sorted the data in multiple ways to extract patterns and themes that occurred. Making sense of the sheer amount of data, Patton (2002) suggested that “ reducing the volume of raw information, shifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal” (p. 432). I used the structure suggested by Creswell (2003); data was verified by: triangulation, member-checking, thick descriptions, checking bias, and comparing with discrepant information.

To apply triangulation, I used a comparative analysis approach to the data (Stokrocki, 1997). I first went through all the information, taking

time to highlight repeating phenomenon or interesting events. Then, I went through the data again, jotting down possible themes that were occurring. These themes were organized by major and minor ideas, and then applied to the data once again. The coded data was then examined again for possible relationships to each other. I began the process of writing thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) to further describe the phenomenon that was occurring. After I finished this first round of analysis, I brought my findings back to the students, to member check the results. The data was compared with conflicting information collected in the study and the emergent themes were reviewed for any bias that I may have as the teacher-researcher.

## Chapter 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

*“The photographer...first learns to see with the camera and think with his eyes”.*

- John Whiting (cited in Kaplan, 2006, p. 61)

This qualitative study examines the phenomenon of shaping the traditional photography curriculum to meet adolescent interests while providing historical context to the medium. My goal was to determine how to balance the technical skills demanded by the practice, the curriculum goals determined by the school district, the perspective of what I deem to be important to learn, and the interests of the students. I have gathered my observations as a teacher researcher, interview excerpts from other photo teachers, the students’ responses to the class, and the photographs they created. It is my hope that by working with my students in my classroom, it is my hope that the results would have relevance to similar high school programs. In this chapter, I describe the setting in which the study takes place, the chronological assignments and events in the semester, and examples of photographs and student responses that developed.

#### Classroom Description/Typical Day

Arriving at the photo classroom is almost a journey in itself; the room is situated in the farthest hallway from the front office. This hallway

houses the fine art and family and consumer science classrooms – one might wonder why the elective classes were all built so far away from the front of the school - but it has allowed the teachers down here a certain freedom to hang displays and hold small group activities in the hallway where other departments do not get the luxury. This distance from the parking area and administration can wear on a teacher; a veteran art educator, tired of hauling supplies and projects from her car, once measured the distance and found it to be one-quarter mile from the main entrance to the hallway.

Walking to the classroom, one notices the large, built-in, glass display case to the right. If it is a good day, the lights to the case are on and one can actually view the artwork; most days the lights remain off because the switch is in the hallway where anyone, including the students, can turn it off. The case houses photography projects from the various levels of photo classes: for example, one display included color photo decals mounted on glass which centered on assumptions about identity from the advanced students and small black and white images from a study of the community from the beginning students.

The photography classroom is on the interior side of the building; all available light emanates from the yellow fluorescents mounted up in the ceiling (see Appendix I, *Diagram and Photographs of the Classroom*). On the right side, at the “front” of the classroom is a counter that has been modified from its original purpose of storage. There are five large Macintosh computer monitors, three high-end Epson printers, and two

flatbed scanners that meet the digital technology needs for the classes. There are display boards above this counter, but the original teacher built them twenty years ago. With the larger computers and equipment on the counter, the display boards are awkward to use on a daily basis. Since these boards were built by hand, the thumbtacks tend to come loose and fall out of the board; these tacks end up in the printer paper tray and jam up the printer functions. In the right corner of the room is a TV that is elevated on a stand that I purchased a few years ago to gain some space on the counter. The TV projects a clock and rolling announcements and is only changed to a different channel when the school video announcements are aired. Next to the counter is a large desk on which a PC computer sits and is a space dedicated for student TAs or an extra student to sit.

The teacher desk is in the middle-front of the space with the student tables arranged in a “U” shape around it. A small white board on the far wall is used for posting due dates and announcements and a laptop cart is housed underneath. The cart holds twenty small Macintosh laptops that were purchased for digital photography needs. Next to the mobile lab is the counter that contains the chemicals and equipment for developing film. There are two sinks with original fixtures that reflect their age and overuse by the corrosion around the faucet and the constant dripping of water. Four bins are also sitting on the counters that contain the beakers, funnels, and jugs of chemicals and there are six large black timers that neighbor these bins. Signs are posted on the cabinet doors with times and instructions for developing film. This entire area is usually covered in

dried chemical drips and water puddles from the students' attempt at cleaning up after they developed their film. Two color darkrooms, which have been converted to film loading spaces, make up the back wall along with the negative lockers. The left side of the room has another long counter and is used for housing the cameras, light table, and paper cutters. Right next to this counter is a storage closet that holds supplies and lighting equipment. Student binders are kept in the three file cabinets by this counter or in some free shelves above. There are posters of the elements and principles of design near the ceiling and the rest of the room has laminated images of famous photographs stapled to the wall. A small message board for school news sits near the entrance as well as a makeshift board in the back for student drawings or interesting visual images, such as advertisements or skate stickers they find and bring in.

The last area of the room is the darkroom which is accessible by a black hallway next to the storage room. To enter the darkroom for the first time, one finds oneself disoriented and likely to bump into the last wall before moving into the open space. A few years back, I tacked up glow-in-the-dark tape in this hallway to help students navigate back into the room, which helps somewhat, but it is normal to hear a few students apologize for running into someone, or more often than not, hear a student scaring people by lurking in the dark recess of the space and jumping out at key moments. Tacked in this passage, there lives a cardboard cutout of Johnny Depp as Captain Jack Black with a handmade sign that reminds students to clean up their enlarger station. The movie cutout was brought

in by a student who found it in a discard pile at the school and he donated it to the classroom; it is kept as a humorous approach to keeping the darkroom clean.

The actual darkroom space is the largest within the school district and houses sixteen enlargers. The enlarger stations take up the two long walls of the room while a large sink used for processing divides the middle of the room. A small table holds a paper cutter and another table that holds large drums of chemicals for processing film and paper. Entering the room when it is empty is almost Zen-like; the dim amber glow of the safelights and the sound of trickling water is quite calming, but when we are in the middle of a project, this place is almost claustrophobic; students work shoulder-to-shoulder and shift past each other as they move through the space from printing to processing while the sounds of activity bounce around the space. A student who accidentally opens his or her filter drawer with the enlarger light still on or tries to use their MP3 players with the display fully lit is apt to be reprimanded by their peers for fogging their paper. As the teacher, I tend to work in the space quite a bit in the fall semester, demonstrating how to use the enlarger and process print. It can be exhausting to attempt to help sixteen students with their individual needs within the fifty-minute time frame. The students' need for guidance ebbs with the demands of the projects and reduces in time as they become more proficient in the craft of printing.

A typical project cycle in the classroom starts with the introduction of the assignment. I give a brief overview of the topic and we examine

historical and fine art photographs that fit within this theme. Students are then given some research and planning activities to complete while we are waiting for their film to be shot; for example, if we are studying portraiture, students would need to analyze studio portraits for lighting techniques, read the textbook chapter on lighting, and search for ideas for their portraits using photography magazines and the Internet. The most difficult part of this stage in the process is not the assignment, but the small number of cameras we have to work with. To give everyone a chance to check out a camera for a day typically takes us two weeks of time, so oftentimes I will introduce a new project while we are continuing the previous one so that we do not create “dead time” in the classroom where we are confined to book work and small activities to pass the time. This “dead time” is usually a cause of misbehavior and a lack of focus in the students as they prefer to be working on something hands-on in their art class, so I attempt to limit this type of class time as much as possible.

An average studio day appears chaotic on the surface, but is a well-practiced routine that has taken time to train the students on how to engage in individual learning. Students take their seats at the start of class so that attendance can be taken, papers passed back, and brief announcements made. Typically, I remind students of upcoming deadlines and what they are required to turn in for the assignment we are working on. Cameras are returned and the checkout list is scanned for any student who forgot to turn his or her equipment back in. Then, the chaos begins; once students are released from their seats, they may develop film,

print in the darkroom, use a laptop to write up their artist statement, or check out a camera to shoot around the school or take with them to capture their images after school. Passes are written for students who need to go take pictures. The rest of the period involves me walking from area to area, helping students as they need assistance. There is the occasional reminder to tell students to get back on task, but most students tend to enjoy the hands-on environment. The clean-up bell rings seven minutes before class ends to remind student to start cleaning up; film developers need to hang their film and clean the developing tank pieces and counter, printers need to clean up their enlarger station and make sure their prints are on the drying rack, and the others need to put their cameras and laptops away. Last minute conversations with students happen at this moment – who is coming to after-school lab, who needs to be reminded to turn in work, who forgot to clean-up, etc. The final bell rings and it is a hurried dash to their next class and the next group of students burst in to start the process all over.

### Description of the Major Projects

#### *I Am Project*

The “I Am” Project was based on the work of Wendy Ewald<sup>7</sup>. In this project, she has students take portraits of one another and has the students add written text on top of their portraits to add an extra

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter Two

dimension to the meaning. While Ewald dealt with issues of race and beauty, I designed this project to allow students to share something personal about them. I thought that this approach was an engaging way to start learning how to use the film camera and darkroom. This assignment came after we had worked with pinhole cameras and created photograms, two very typical assignments in the traditional approach to teaching a beginning photography course.

I first introduced the camera, introducing vocabulary and basic optic principles to help students understand how it works. I went over the basic operations of the shutter and aperture, but felt that they didn't quite grasp the concepts from their blank expressions (field notes 8.24.10). We held the cameras and pretended to take pictures; it took a while for them to adjust to using a viewfinder since they had only used digital cameras before this. We then practiced how to load and rewind film. Once the students had a basic understanding of the equipment, I explained the project. I asked them to think about the process of getting to know people and how sometimes we assume who a person is by his or her outward appearance. I then asked them to think of something they would want to share about themselves to the rest of the class; this is what they would write on their image. Their insight had to be supported by the composition of the image, so students needed to think about how to visually support their words. I then showed previous examples from a year ago and we discussed about what images were successful and which were not.

For the next few days, I sent the students out with cameras to take their portraits and shoot some “free shots” of anything they wanted. If the students remained in class, they worked on a journal entry and completed a history of photography worksheet using an article from *Newsweek* on the topic. I stayed in the classroom, but students were to come to me with any questions about the camera or the assignment. These two days were full of energy and excitement; the students couldn’t wait to take their pictures and came back with stories to tell me of whom they coaxed into posing for them and where in the school they shot their images. When everyone was done with his or her rolls, I demonstrated how to develop film. We practiced loading old film onto reels and putting the developing tank together. This seemed to be engaging to the students, especially when we had a contest to see who could load the fastest with the lights turned off in the classroom. They were less excited when I walked them through the chemical developing process. There are so many steps and so many things to remember, that the students usually tune out when this demonstration occurs (field notes 8.31.10). To combat this lack of focus on an important process in film photography, each student receives a step-by-step instruction sheet on how to develop film and this list is posted on the cabinet doors of the developing counter.

Film developing went as smoothly as it can, with a few spills and incorrectly developed rolls along the way. Some students had to retake their photos either due to not using the light meter correctly (and underexposing their film) or not using the chemicals properly. Once the

majority of people had a roll of film developed, I started demonstrating how to print with a negative. I divided the class into two groups since we could not all fit into the darkroom space at once. Both groups received the same demonstration of how to place the negative in the carrier and use the enlarger to project the image. I showed them how to create a test strip to find the correct exposure time and how to control the exposure through the lens and timer. Lastly, I reviewed the steps for processing, reminding the students how much time the paper had to be in each tray and to agitate the chemicals. Students were so excited to start printing that it was hard to keep the students focused on the correct techniques for creating the photograph. The first few days of printing were an exhausting time for me, as all the students needed one-on-one help (field notes 9.9.10).

Students were asked to print their portraits plus an image from the “free-shoot” part of the film so they had the chance to reinforce printing techniques. When everyone was done with this step, I had everyone turn in his or her “free-shoot” print for grading. I then had the students examine their portrait print and we discussed how they could add text to their images. We talked about choices such as placement, font size, and types of font they could use. They were encouraged to write the words out on a scrap piece of paper first so a peer or I could check their spelling and grammar. Students had a choice of writing with black permanent marker or a white paint pen. Finally, students mounted the photos on plain black paper and we had a brief critique to look at everyone’s work.

### *Who We Are: Images of Contemporary Teenagers*

“Who We Are: Images of Contemporary Teenagers” was the next project. To spur the students’ interest, I showed clips from two movies, *Mean Girls* and *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*. Both of these movies are considered school genre films in which school culture is shown in a comical and stereotypical way. The first movie, *Mean Girls*, is about a girl who grew up in Africa and recently moved to the American suburbs. The film is about her experience learning about the social cliques in a high school. I chose to show the trailer of this movie because it covered the idea of teenage stereotypes (the jock, the stoner, the cheerleader) very well. The other movie, *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*, centers on a teenage boy who plays hooky from school and has a series of adventures. The clip I played was the scene in which the history teacher is giving a lecture and not noticing that the students are completely disengaged. After I caught their attention through these movie clips, we then examined the history of the teenager. We looked at images and advertisements from the 1950s until today and discussed what stereotypes occur when people view adolescents. Finally, we examined the work of Daoud Bey, a photographer who created a series titled *Class Pictures*<sup>8</sup>. He interviewed adolescents about their hopes and dreams and then created large format portraits of these teenagers. In this traveling exhibit, the students’ statements about themselves hang side-by-side their portrait.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.dawoubey.net/>

The students' assignment was to shoot a roll of film either focusing on stereotypes of adolescents or highlighting teenagers as individuals who do not reflect stereotypes society creates about this age group. Students were allowed to shoot during school for this project. While they were waiting for their turn to use a camera, students had to research images of teenagers on the Internet and analyze them for context to determine the nature of the image. This is the first time we encountered school censorship; some of the images students chose were of teenagers drinking, doing drugs, or being intimate. While I agreed those are important issues teenagers deal with everyday, I had to ask them to not use those images because they were too mature and not appropriate this school setting. While many students wanted to demonstrate stereotypes in their project, the majority of students ended up focusing on a few friends or activities; it turned out to take too much time for the students to setup and visualize the idea of stereotyping. With the small amount of cameras and the length of time it took to give every student time with the equipment, students had to shoot their film quickly. Students were visibly excited about this project and the chance to try their shooting and processing skills again (field notes 9.22.10).

To finish the project, students had to compose text on each of their three images. This text could be direct quotes from the subjects about being a teenager, descriptions of the subject and his or her activities, or general ideas and issues about teenagers themselves. This text was typed using the laptops and then students mounted the text and photos on black

paper. Before turning the project in, we had a group critique of the images and the students filled out an evaluation sheet about their own project.

### *Images of Schooling*

The “Images of Schooling” project started with an introduction to the history of American schooling. I first started by having students jot down images they think of when they hear the word “school”. After they jotted these down, I had them put a positive or negative symbol next to each one. Many students had words such as “homework” and “getting up early” with negative signs by them, while positive signs went next to “girls” and “friends”. We went around the room and shared some results. Next, I showed the classes photos of one-room schools, early high schools, and contemporary classrooms. We examined the similarities in the design of the rooms and the way the teachers and students used the space. Finally, we talked about what the purpose of schooling is and how it has remained somewhat static compared to the fast changes of today’s world.

Before the students starting to shoot their film, I gave another lecture on camera technique, specifically how the aperture and shutter affect the look of the image. The students took notes and then, to reinforce the concepts, I had them complete a journal entry about camera techniques; short depth of field, long depth, of field, stopped motion, blurred motion, and panning. The students completed this image hunt while they were waiting for their turn to take their photos. While this might not have been directly related to the topic at hand, I felt the students

needed a review of how the camera works so that they may use some of these concepts to make their images look the way they want them to. After students shot their film, they developed the rolls and each printed three images to turn in.

Students were asked to write a five to ten sentence statement about their series of images. Some students had problems trying to find a connection in their images as they took a random approach to taking their images and found it hard to find a larger theme among their images (field notes 10.25.10). Once everyone had finished, we held a critique where the images were laid out and students worked in groups to analyze the images. The groups were asked to look at four projects and report back to the class with what they discovered. The groups were required to point out the techniques of depth of field and motion that we have been discussing.

This point in the semester was a little less focused than the earlier part of the semester. I felt that even though the photographic techniques were becoming stronger, the students seemed unfocused and some chose to stop working all together (field notes 10.20.10). This lack of engagement is common for this time of year, but it became frustrating to constantly remind students to get to work. At this point, I did wonder if the project was the reason for the lack of commitment, but the complexity of the images that were created was very strong, so I concluded that it must be the general energy level of the students at that point.

## *Family*

The Family project was, by far, the most engaging lesson. The lesson was introduced by examining the beginnings of family photos in the Victorian age. We looked at the reason for taking family pictures as well as the role of the mother as the family historian. Next, we focused on the nature of family photos as Kodak introduced more accessible cameras such as the Brownie and how family vacations and celebrations became a part of the family photo aesthetic. Then, I shared some of my family photos that I have taken of my family, telling them brief stories of what was happening in each pictures. Finally, we reviewed the website Awkward Family Photos<sup>9</sup> which asked people to send in their funny family portraits. As we discussed what the “perfect” family photo looks like, I read an excerpt from Bender and Chernack’s (2010) book that reads:

Walk into just about anyone’s home and you can find one hanging prominently on the wall proudly displayed for all to see. An attempt at wish fulfillment for Mom and Dad, the family portrait provides the chance for them to capture the ideal vision of their brood – ridiculously happy, clean-cut, well-dressed, and trying not to kill one another...But if we look past the matching sweaters and the choreographed poses, we will often see a more interesting story – the true family dynamic, complete with quirks and vulnerabilities. (p. 11).

I ended the dialogue by reminding students that families are not always traditional. I gave the examples that some of my close friends are “aunts and uncles” to my children since I do not have family who live nearby.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://awkwardfamilyphotos.com/>

While the students were given a few weeks to take their images, they were asked to bring in an old photo from one of their family members. I showed the students how to scan these images into the computer and edit them with Photoshop to remove the background and make them black and white. Next, I printed each image onto a transparency for each student while the students created a background in Photoshop that related to the person they chose. Students were excited to work in Photoshop and be able to see the possibilities of the program. After I printed the backgrounds, students glued the transparency and background together to finish out the image.

The Family Project was the moment that students' personal lives affected their ability to complete their assignment. Some students complained that they never see their family members until very late at night (if at all) and I found out who lives in a single parent home or with an aunt. One student admitted that her family never speaks to one another and will not sit down together for a photograph (field notes 11.1.10). She, and a few others, ended up taking photos of their friends and defending their choice in their written statement for the project. Sadly, there were two grandfathers who passed away during this project, and much worse, a little sister who drowned in the family pool. This student was gone for over a week dealing with the passing of her sister. When she returned to school, she was given the option of opting out of the project. She decided that she would not shoot film of her family, but she wanted to bring in an image of her sister to complete the Photoshop part of the

project. It was a very difficult hour when her mother came in with the photos of her daughter for us to scan. Our conversation was strained – I told her I had no idea what to say- but we carefully spoke around the issue as I scanned in the photos for the student to use. This student used this project almost as an art therapy moment as she carefully constructed the image.

Students were asked once again to write five to ten sentence statements about their work and we conducted a similar critique to the one before. This time, students had to determine what elements of the photos made it effective and use the correct terminology we have covered. Students commented on the similarities of the classes' images as well as the obvious bonds we have with our families. There were quite a few images of grandparents and pets in the classes. Many students noted that their families were resistant to having their photo taken.

### *Images of My Community (Final Project)*

Our last project was focused on looking at our community. We started by looking at the history of the town. This town was first the “hay capital of the world”, growing hay and cotton to sell in Phoenix and other nearby areas. Once the railroad was built, the crops were sold in farther cities. As I gave them the story behind the area, we looked at historical images of the space. Students could recognize the water tower and the major downtown street and enjoyed pointing out places that have remained essentially unchanged. We looked at the school buildings of the

areas, especially the original elementary and high school buildings since they are still educational buildings today (one is a museum and one is the school district offices). I ended the conversation by asking the students to think about what part of the town they will remember thirty years from now as influential to their development as a person. Because the student population does not all live in the town, I gave them the option to focus on the greater Phoenix area.

Once again, we needed a couple weeks to get everyone through the camera checkout system, so I introduced some basic compositional techniques such as leading lines and rule of thirds. While students were waiting to shoot, they had to create a journal entry that showed examples of different compositional rules. The students found these images in magazines provided in the classroom. This was not the students' favorite activity, but I felt it was necessary to further their understanding of how to compose an image that has impact. When they did develop their film, the students had to print four images from their roll and write a ten to fifteen sentence statement on their series. This project showed the strongest work from the students; the majority of students had technically sound prints with strong compositions.

We spent two days on the critique process because I wanted the students to have time to examine the images in depth. We analyzed the photographs for composition, technical skills, and meaning as well as comparing the text with the students' work. Although the community project was the final project of the semester, seven students did not

complete the assignment. One of these students was suspended for fighting during this time, but the other students did not give themselves enough time to finish the project.

### Examples and Statements from Major Projects

#### *“I Am” Project*



*Photograph 4.1 Self Portrait by fifteen-year-old boy.*

The image above was created by a fifteen-year-old boy. His parents emigrated from Vietnam and have held onto their language and culture. Although English is not this student’s first language, he is an excellent student and works hard to maintain his grades. The image shows the boy sitting alone on a bench at the football field. He looks dejected and disengaged. The text states, “Sometimes I feel very frustrated and overwhelmed.” To enhance his message of alienation, he has placed himself in the center of his photograph with much empty space around

him. The text is constricting him to the one spot by tracing the line of the bench, wrapping around his head, and tracing the rest of the bench. The handwriting is precise and careful, much like his style of speaking to his teachers.

When asked about why he wanted to share this aspect of himself, he responded, “I want everyone to know how I feel sometimes. Life is not always going well for me, and sometimes I have to get over the obstacles on my path to the future.” This student navigates between two cultures; the traditional views of his family and the American high school experience.



*Photograph 4.2 Self-portrait by fifteen-year-old boy*

This image was created by a fifteen-year-old boy. This student is a member of the varsity football team, but often has trouble with his behavior at the school. While he excels in subjects such as science, he

struggles with math and following school rules. When in trouble, he will argue that it is only because he is African-American, even if he admits he broke the rules. The photograph depicts the student scaling a chain-link fence at the school. The text reads, “On my way to the top, with no intention of looking back.” The angle of view is slightly skewed, which leads the top of the fence to create a strong diagonal to the right. The boy’s body positioning suggests strength and determination; one can see that it is easy for him to complete this climbing feat. The text suggests determination, but it is written straight across the top of the image, showing no suggestion of thought to layout or enhancing the composition.

When asked about the purpose of this image, the student states, “I want to show everyone the way I look at life, and how important it is to me.” When the other students pointed out that he looks like he was escaping from a prison, the student was surprised; he did not picture this idea while creating the image.



*Photograph 4.3 Self-portrait from fourteen-year-old girl*

A fourteen-year-old girl produced the above photograph. This girl has an artistic sense of style; she dresses in a funky, bohemian fashion, but is rather quiet and shy. She demonstrates a higher maturity than most of her peers and has been invited to work with the Advanced Art student collaboration project. Her image shows her crouched down, under the stadium steps, peering out through a chain link fence. The supporting text states, “I am always looking in from the outside.”

The angle of view causes the edge of the bleachers and the bar of the fence to form a severe triangle frame around the girl. Her fair complexion stands out in contrast from the black shadow under the bleachers and her black shirt. The text is written in a direct diagonal opposite the bleacher edge, but mimics the fence bar. The photographer adds another dimension to the text by presenting the letters in black against the light gray of the bleachers and white in the shadow area. Her gaze is directed off

the scene to the left while her body and hands suggest some tension of being confined. When asked to share her thoughts about this image, she responds in a hesitant manner. She writes, “It is part of who I am...the picture tells exactly what it’s saying.”



*Photograph 4.4 Self-portrait from a fourteen-year-old girl*

A fourteen-year-old girl created this photo. This student is shy and quiet, but is actively engaged in class. She enjoys learning about photography, but does not socialize with many students in the room. Her image depicts her sitting alone on the stadium bleachers, facing out to the empty track. The text reads, “I’m afraid of dying alone.” The contrast of her dark outfit compared with the lighter bleachers and track emphasize her small size in relation to the background. The fence and stair railings of

the bleachers slightly frame her figure. The text is written straight across the bottom of the image, with no regard for enhancing the focal point of the image. It can be argued that the simplicity of the text layout could emphasize the dramatic content of the statement.

The technical aspects of this image are weak; the image is a little unfocused and there are chemical stains on the film, but the artist is very proud of her compositional choices. When asked about her choice of such a serious statement, she replies, “I wanted to share this aspect of myself because it is my only fear that I don’t think I could ever get over.”



*Photograph 4.5 Self-Portrait from sixteen-year-old boy*

The last “I Am” image is from a sixteen-year-old male student who plays on the varsity football team. He is not the strongest academic student in the class and often is disengaged in the day-to-day activities of the classroom, but every now and then, something sparks his interest and he becomes excited and focused on his work. This image was one of his

favorite projects (his mother has the image posted at her work and he reprinted a copy to display in his bedroom). The student is leaning against a vending machine in the cafeteria area of the school. He looks tough and conveys a sense of attitude. The side of the vending machine has an ad from Gatorade that displays “Bring it”, which the student altered with a black marker by the student to depict “I bring it”.

The composition is split down the center, creating an informal balance between the vending machine and the student. He looks defiant at the camera and his body posture suggests a defensive position. The text is highlighted by the thin black outline around the letters, with the letter “I” drawn in. When asked about the creation of this image, the student stated, “I thought it would look cool if I looked all [bad-ass] standing next to the Gatorade machine that said ‘Bring It’... and the irony of the text and the way I was standing, like I could take anyone.”

### *Who We Are: Images of Contemporary Teenagers*

In this project, the students were asked to interview their teenage subject and transcribe the responses. Some students choose to write the texts themselves to explain their choice of subject. In this section, the student texts are first and then I follow with a brief analysis of the image.

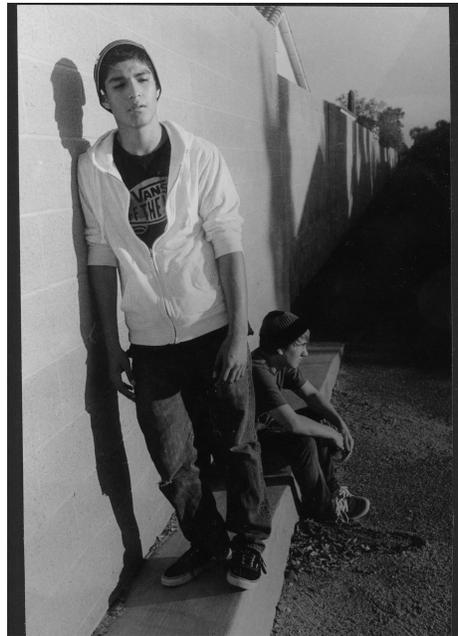


*Photograph 4.6 Teenage Image by fourteen-year-old girl*

Being a Mom at a young age is an experience I can't even really to get you to understand. You'd have to spend a day in my shoes to get a remote understanding of the difficulties and joys I experience on a daily basis.

I got pregnant at the age of 18 by accident (I didn't plan for it) and thought well at least I made it to 18 that's got to make it somewhat easier, being legal age and all. So wrong, being a mom is a hard thing, and I don't think age plays much factor in that statement. Being a young mom is most definitely harder. Ideally a mother is married and grown and has her life in some sort of order. Well I had none of that going for me, I was 18 involved with a man who was also just finding his way (stumbling through difficulties) in his own life, and my life was no where perfect or where it should have been. I was doing stupid things, living in stupid ways and not at all prepared for what was about to slap me upside my head. I cannot imagine how much harder it would be to be even younger and having children. Like being 16 and living at home, still in high school, and barely being legal to drive. Now that would be hard! I find it hard to complain after thinking about how hard that must be! Regardless of how hard and stressful being a young mother is I must say it's the greatest joy of my life! And all the difficulties and stress that comes along with it is **TOTALLY** worth it and much more in the end.

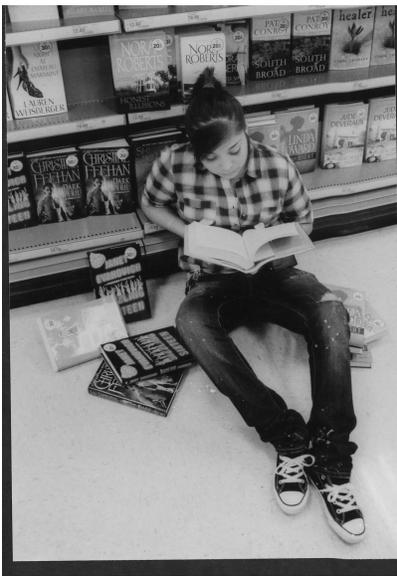
The female photographer chose to highlight her sister, who, as the text states, became a mother at a young age. The series of three images presents her sister in a positive light, showing the sister and her baby daughter in various close poses. In this image, the sister sitting on the ground is looking at her standing daughter. The daughter is dressed in a tutu and is looking off camera, possibly at her grandmother. The dark background frames the two on the grass while the implied line of the two heads and the sister's arms creates a dynamic triangle to keep the viewer's attention on the faces of the mother and daughter.



*Photograph 4.7 Image by fifteen-year-old girl*

People have the idea that all teenagers do drugs, steal, and are into stuff they shouldn't be. But only the bad people give us all the reputation, when really high schoolers do a lot of good.

This photographer chose to focus on two of her male friends and had them pose in her neighborhood. Her interview gathered information on defying teenage stereotypes. In this image, the two boys are next to a wall that separates houses from the street. The nearest boy is standing, leaning against the wall while looking to the right. The farther boy is sitting down on the curb and looking off to the right as well. The sun is low in the horizon, causing dramatic shadows in the scene. The wall and curb create a strong diagonal to the back of the image.



*Photograph 4.8 Image by seventeen-year-old girl*

“Anna” is not the star student when it comes to grades. She is much rather the kid who makes the whole class laugh in the middle of a test. She barely achieves a C average with no effort put in at all. Though her English teachers would assume she has never read a book willingly on her own, Anna secretly has a passion for novels.

This student chose to focus on three individual friends, highlighting something unique about each of them. All three images are taken at Walmart, a favorite hangout of this group of students. This photograph depicts a girl sitting on the floor of the store, leaning up against a shelf of books. She is reading one book, while other books are scattered on the floor around her. She is looking at the book, so the viewer sees part of her face and the top of her head. Her body creates a slight diagonal to the picture frame, adding dynamic quality to the image.



*Photograph 4.9 Image by nineteen-year-old boy*

Boys will be boys. In this group of guys, no guy is the same as the other. Yet despite whatever differences they have, they all manage to be close enough to laugh, have fun, and take a picture together.

This boy centered his project on his group of friends who share a lunch period with him. The four boys are posed against a brick wall in the lunch area. The first boy stands straight ahead, with his arms by his side. The second boy placed his forearms on the boys on either side of him,

tilted his head, and has his body at a slight angle. The third boy stands in a relaxed fashion, similar to the first boy, while the last boy placed his forearm on the boy next to him and stuck his other elbow out in the same way as his other arm. Each boy has a unique gaze at the camera, suggesting their individual personalities. It is possible that the photographer helped pose the boys in this arrangement.



*Photograph 4.10 Image by a fifteen-year-old girl*

The question that haunts EVERYONE! The love for an activity? The love for a person? The love for an animal perhaps? Everyone probably has a different perspective of what this word truly means. But everyone had a guess of the meaning. Love: NOUN; A feeling of warm personal attachment or deep affection as for a parent, child, or friend.

The idea of defining the concept of love was the driving force of this girl's project. In her series, she introduced the idea of love and then interviewed a couple of friends about their interpretations. In this image, a girl is holding a cardboard sign that reads, "What is love?" The

photographer framed her subject in the bottom center of the image, at a slight worms-eye perspective. There is a slight imbalance between the amount of empty space and the size of the subject.



*Photograph 4.11 Image by a fourteen-year-old girl*

“Shaun”, 14, is a freshman here at [our school]. He’s a tall, African American male that is stereotyped to play basketball. Even though he does, he is modest about his skills. He is one of the sweetest guys I met and I believe he doesn’t get seen for that. In my eyes, he is seen for his skills in basketball. IF people really got to know Shaun, they would find out that he is extremely funny and outgoing. He sees himself as a hard worker and always willing to try new things. Shaun is a really sweet guy and should be seen for more than just his athletic abilities.

This photographer knew immediately which friend she was going to shoot for her project. Her friend, “Shaun”, is a basketball player at the school who is often overlooked as a “jock”. She placed the smiling boy in the center of the image and chose to blur the background of the main school hallway. Even though she attempted to eliminate the distraction

of the background, the white column that is directly behind his right ear directs attention away from the subject.



*Photograph 4.12 Image by sixteen-year-old girl*

Being a teenager, it sometimes seems like I'm forced to live a life of mediocrity. I can't go where I want, do what I want, or even sleep when I want. My freedom is limited to the confines of my boring house. But I suppose if I were given the opportunity and the freedom, I think I would be too accustomed to my lifestyle to even attempt to take advantage of it.

The subject of this image is the sister of the photographer (who was also in the same photography class). The photograph depicts the sister on the far right of the image, staring off camera. She is sitting, with the light from the window projecting on her. The light reflects off her glasses and illuminates the right side of her body. A dark movie poster balances the composition between the girl and the empty space. This image reflects the photographer's sense of light and shadow by how she framed her subject

within the lighted area of the room, while leaving the darker areas of the background for contrast.

*Images of Schooling*



*Photograph 2.13 Lunch image by seventeen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 2.14 Gate image by seventeen-year-old girl*

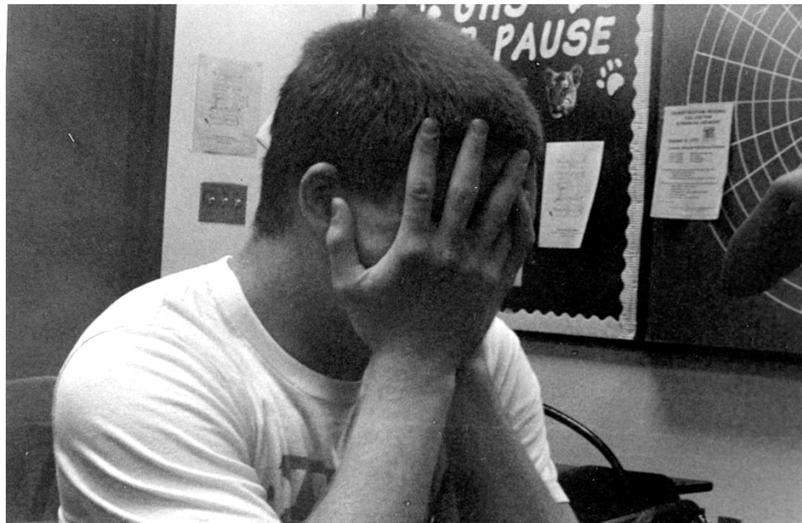


*Photograph 2.15 Trophy image by seventeen-year-old girl*

All three of my photos are around school in completely different areas. The first photo shows the ongoing phenomenon that is texting. While walking through a hallway at school, you always see at least three people texting or using an electronic device. People text literally everywhere for every reason. It is rare nowadays that people do not own a cell phone. Communication happens more electronically than face-to-face at school. Students text during class, in between class, after school and during lunch – sometimes even when they're sitting right next to each other. Texting makes communication easier during school. The next photo is of the gate between the glass hallway. I guess this picture is somewhat symbolic to me. Some people view school as a prison, or something that's holding them back. The last photo features the trophies our [school's] marching band has earned. Marching band is basically my reason for living. It's shaped me into a more responsible and disciplined person. Without it, I have no idea where I would be. Overall, all three photos have some sort of connection with me personally and students at school.

This series of images explores the common spaces of the main school building. In the first image, a group of girls sit at a lunch table. Rather than engaging with each other through direct conversation, they are poised over cell phones, absorbed by the communication technology.

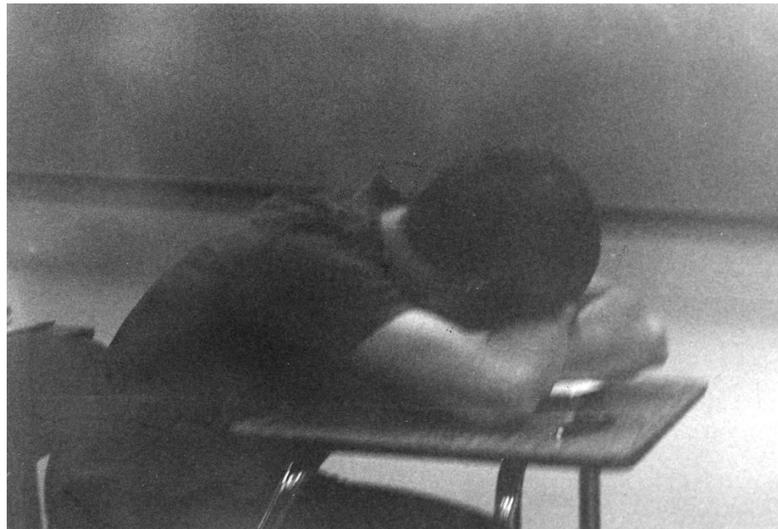
The girl in the center of the table is slightly emphasized due to her dark jacket. The next image is of the gate that divides the lunch area from the front of the building (where the offices are). The gate is emphasized by the use of a short depth of field, where the gate is in sharp focus and the background is blurred. The gate occupies the entire frame, suggesting a large obstacle to movement in the school. The last image is of some trophies won by the marching band at this school. This student uses her membership with the marching band as a way to define herself, so naturally, images of the band appear in her projects. The four trophies are shot in a steep diagonal line from the side, using a short depth of field to emphasize the front trophy. The lighter background contrasts with the dark tiger heads of the trophies.



*Photograph 2.16 Image of classmate by sixteen-year-old boy*



*Photograph 2.17 Image of classmate by sixteen-year-old boy*



*Photograph 2.18 Image of classmate by sixteen-year-old boy*

These three pictures are examples of students being tired in school. Students become tired from waking up early and are sometimes found with their head on a desk taking a nap. In the pictures, there are students asleep, falling asleep, and looking tired and exhausted. They truly capture how students feel when they are in school. Another reason that kids can be tired is that [their] teachers ramble on in monotone voices, and the kids get bored and decide to fall asleep. This allows the students to escape from the dull environment of school.

A sophomore boy who also tends to demonstrate signs of boredom and a lack of interest in school created this series of disengaged male students. The film was developed incorrectly and shows signs of uneven development and chemical stains. Each image is center-weighted, with the subject's head in the middle of the frame. They are all taken in classroom setting, with the boys sitting at desks and various school objects, such as bulletin boards and desks fill the background. In the first photograph, the boy covers his face with his hand, obscuring his identity. The second image has the subject laying his head on the desk and looks blankly off to the side. The last image is of a sleeping student at a desk, his arms creating a pillow for his head. He is turned away from the camera.



*Photograph 4.19 Image of stadium by fourteen-year-old girl  
(letter blurred for anonymity by researcher)*



*Photograph 4.20 Image of library by fourteen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.21 Image of sign by fourteen-year-old girl*

High school is very different then elementary and junior high. It has its ups and downs. I have noticed high school has way more rules than I expected. And the work here is nonstop. But then again high school is really fun. Like the Friday night games, all the activities, and clubs they have here. All around I really like it. I just have to get use to some of it.

A freshman girl created this series in which she wanted to describe her new school, possibly to make sense of the unfamiliar environment. In the first image, the home bleachers in the stadium are the main subjects.

While the letters of the school is center-weighted, the press box is pushed off to the side and the ratios of the bleachers, sky, and ground create a sense of diving the picture plane into thirds. The letters dominate the image; clearly declaring which school this stadium belongs to. The next image is a girl studying in the library. She is looking toward the book she is holding. Other books, notebooks, and pens are scattered on the table. The focus of the image is on the girl and the table, while the rest of the image is slightly out of focus. The final image is a sign posted on the school building. It is shot at a slight worm's eye angle, giving the sign a looming quality.



*Photograph 4.22 Image of classroom by fifteen-year-old boy*



*Photograph 4.23 Image of classroom by fifteen-year-old boy*



*Photograph 4.24 Image of library by fifteen-year-old boy*

My photos are showing some of the rooms at [our school]. My photos are showing mostly empty rooms and how they are set up. The rooms in the pictures all have tables or desks like most of the rooms in schools. The pictures are all of [carpeted] rooms even though [this] school [is] mostly tile.

The physical space of the school was the topic of this project for a fifteen-year-old boy. The first image displays an empty classroom, the desks and blackboard shot at a slight angle. The repeated pattern of the

desk creates a sense of sameness throughout the room. The second image depicts a room used as a study space for students with learning disabilities. The room and corrals are bare and there are fewer chairs than study spaces. The room does not appear to be welcoming. The last image is of the library. The photograph is taken from the second floor windows and at a slight angle. Once again, the repetition of the tables and chairs give a sense of monotony.



*Photograph 4.25 Image of the street during student pick-up at and elementary school by fifteen-year-old boy*



*Photograph 4.26 Image of school after the final bell rings by fifteen-year-old boy*



*Photograph 4.27 Image of elementary school yard by fifteen-year-old boy*

I focused on what it was like after and before classes are over. Cars line up to pick up kids while others try to get out, lots of traffic and [it] takes a while. But the little kids just play on in their playground and outside the school. I have to pick up my sister from her [school] a lot and they are always enjoying their time outside of their classrooms.

This photographer chose to focus on his sister's elementary school. In his first image, the photographer captures the line of parents in their cars waiting to pick up their children. The street is captured at a slight diagonal

that adds a sense of movement to the composition. The second image shows young students running from the school building. There is a sense of freedom to the students' movement suggesting their enjoyment to be free from the school building. The third image shows students leaving the school grounds, but there is a fence barring the photographer from the school boundaries. While his reflective statement does not demonstrate the sense of security (fences and being picked up in a car) and confinement (building) that young students experience.

### *Family*



*Photograph 4.28 Image of mother and daughter by seventeen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.29 Image of mother and daughter by seventeen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.30 Image of mother and daughter hugging by seventeen-year-old girl*

A mother-daughter relationship can be one of the most beautiful, loving, frustrating, challenging relationships a girl deals with in her life. But, every second is worth it. The peaks of the relationship are rewarding and blissful; when the special bond that exists is thriving. Then there are the valleys – the arguments, the bickering, the denied request for extended curfew. These valleys are lessons in life – invaluable experiences that teach us grace, patience, and unconditional love. This unconditional love may be a little one-

sided at first (especially during those teenage years), but as a daughter myself I can attest to the love I have for my mother growing more unconditional everyday.

This is the only project that focused on mother and daughter relationships. The seventeen-year-old girl who created this series is nicknamed “Mom” by her male peers in her class because she tends to make sure they stay focused and finish their projects on time, so it can be assumed that she believes the role of the mother is important. Her images show a sense of spontaneity in their compositions; instead of using formal portrait techniques, she allowed her subjects to interact with each other. The first image is a close view of the mother hugging and kissing her daughter. There is no visible background. The second image is of the mother and daughter, one on each side of the picture frame. The daughter’s hand is by the mother’s face, possibly brushing hair off her cheek. The last image is of the mother and daughter hugging again. This time there is a slight view of the back yard where the image was taken and the viewer sees more of a full body view. The mother gazes out to the camera while the daughter clasps her mother to her chest and looks up to the sky. There is a suggestion of a slight role reversal since the mother is lower in the composition as well as in the arms of her daughter.



*Photograph 4.31 Image of pet by fourteen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.32 Image of pet by fourteen-year-old girl*

My family is smaller than most; there is my dad, my dog, and me. My dad has to work a lot, being a single parent, so my dog is like my best friend. Chaz (my dog) is a little wild guy; he wakes up at 5:00 every morning and runs around. He chews on everything in his reach – he just got tall enough to look over the table. Whatever he gets he swings around and releases it, in other words, he plays fetch with himself. Chaz is a little troublemaker as well; when he knows

he's done something he hides under the table or uses his toothpick legs to run. Chaz is my family and it's always fun to watch my deer-legged dog do his daily laps around the small yard and when my dad comes home man's best friend comes to play.

This student reflects many students' concerns about the family project; how do they capture family who is not home or lives in another house? The fourteen-year-old girl photographer decided to focus on her pet, since her father is not home often. The first image captures the dog trying to get something off the kitchen table. The girl caught the dog in mid-action, demonstrating his size and cunning. The arm of the chair is in a direct diagonal to the angle of the dog, creating a balanced composition. The second image is a portrait of the dog. The chair legs frame the dog and the black background helps bring focus to the dog. The dog looks directly at the camera, mimicking a traditional portrait of a person.



*Photograph 4.33 Image of great-grandmother by seventeen-year-old girl*

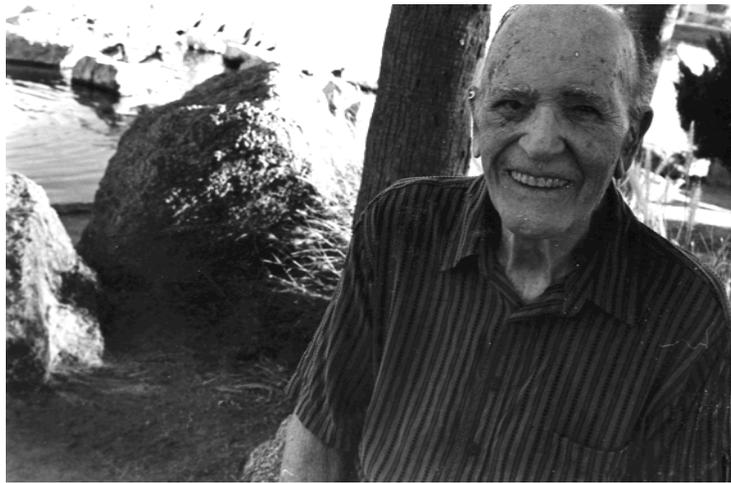


*Photograph 4.34 Image of great-grandmother and grandmother by seventeen-year-old girl*

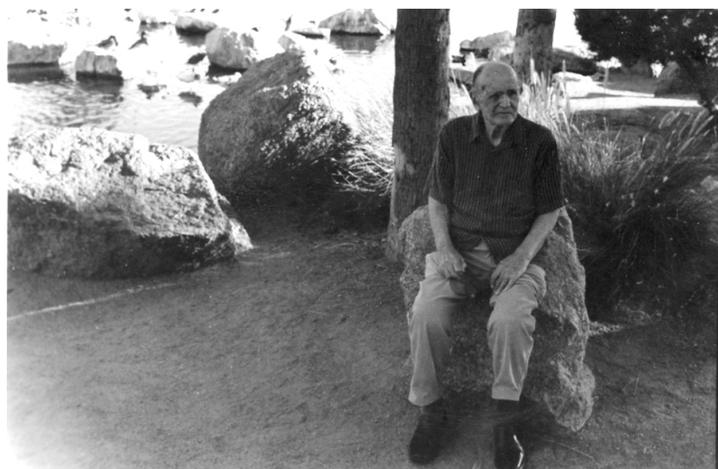
My family means everything to me. I couldn't ask for a better set. My great grandmother Helen is one of the strongest women I have ever met. She can make it through anything. She just turned 96 years old a few days ago. And will keep staying strong for more years to come. When we are at family get-togethers we all see the family tree come down to me. She has helped my family so much in the past, and she will always be there for us no matter what. She is the most amazing great grandma any great grand daughter can ask for. I love you.

Grandparents were a favorite topic among the students. In this series, the photographer chose to focus on her great-grandmother. In the first image, her grandmother is sitting on a bench in a hallway and is smiling at the camera. The wall border, bench, and picture frame divide the background into thirds. The photographer placed her slightly off-center to provide balance to the picture frame. In the second image, the great-grandmother and grandmother sit in a restaurant, both on the same side of the table. They are in the middle of a conversation and are slightly

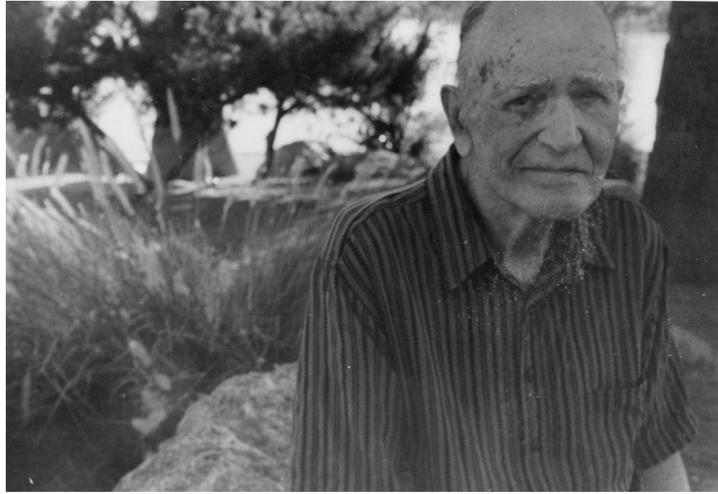
leaning toward each other. The photographer balanced the two women side-by-side in the composition. This project demonstrates some film developing issues that this student encountered. She placed her roll of film incorrectly in the developing tank: thus, the film did not receive an even development during processing.



*Photograph 4.35 Image of grandfather by seventeen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.36 Image of grandfather by seventeen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.37 Image of grandfather by seventeen-year-old girl*

I chose my grandpa, aka Papa, because he means the world to me. Him and my grandma are my reason for everything. Unfortunately last year my grandma died otherwise I would've done them both. They are both my role models and are always there. His name, Papa, was my very first word. He was also the only person who could get me to sleep when I was little. I love him with all my heart and hope one day he will be able to walk me down the aisle. So I was glad to do this project, actually both of them on him, to honor him for all the great things he's done in his life. Even before I took the pictures, he called me his 'world's best photographer'.

This seventeen-year-old photographer chose to focus on a grandparent. She planned a photo shoot at the local park with her grandfather, carefully placing him on a rock by the water feature. The first image is a slight close-up of the man, in which the photographer framed her grandfather on the right of the image, reflecting her understanding of a rules-of-thirds composition. The second image is similar in nature, except the photographer stepped back and included more of the background. The third image keeps the grandfather in the same framing as the first

image, but the photographer changed her angle-of-view. All three images reflect the underexposure of the film, either due to a development error or incorrectly reading the light meter.



*Photograph 4.38 Image of pet by seventeen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.39 Image of father playing video games by seventeen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.40 Image of parents' wedding photograph by seventeen-year-old girl*

*There was no text submitted with this project.*

The seventeen-year-old girl who created the above project took a slightly different approach to the family theme. In her first image, she captured a portrait of her dog. She angled the camera lens and used a short depth of field to create an uncommon view. The lighter background helps emphasize the dog's dark fur. The second image depicts her father playing a video game. The student chose to include just a part of her father, while emphasizing the computer monitor. She used a selective focus to present the monitor in focus and the father blurred. The last image is of the parents' framed wedding photograph. While taking a "picture of a picture" is usually not approved subject matter, the angle of view and depth of field that the photographer used makes this image an interesting perspective on the idea of family.



*Photograph 4.41 Family portrait by fourteen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.42 Image of sister and nephew by fourteen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.43 Image of nephew by fourteen-year-old student*

My family is anything but normal. My sister and my nephew are always running errands. My sister works hard to provide for [her son]. She is a dedicated mother and great sister. My brother is my idol. I have always looked up to him and wanted to be like him. He became close to being paralyzed, but he never gave up on his dream, basketball. My mom is what keeps us together even though we all live completely different lives! She works two jobs and still has time to make dinner.

This last project represented another common concern for the students; how to present the idea of non-traditional families. This student focused on her mother, brother, sister, and nephew. The first image is a traditional take on a family portrait. The three adults are sitting on a bench and leaning in to one another. The toddler sits on his mother's lap. All four of them are looking at the camera. The photographer included a small amount of the background to frame her family. The second image is of her sister and nephew at a store. The nephew sits in a stroller – his attention is elsewhere - while his mother looks off to the right. The photographer captured a moment-in-time of her sister's life. The final image is of her nephew, who is looking through a baby gate to the

photographer. He is grasping the bars as if he wants to be on the other side. The photographer used a short depth of field technique and a center-weighted composition to provide focus to the boy.

*My Community*



*Photograph 4.44 Image of outside of library by fifteen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.45 Image of library stacks by fifteen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.46 Image of library bookshelves by fifteen-year-old girl*

I did my project on one of the branches of the County Library. I took pictures on that particular library because I spent so much time there when I was younger. Also because everyday, people go there to gain knowledge. In the past I used the library's books to learn English. Today I go there to study so I can one day go to college and then attend medical school. I was trying to show the viewer that libraries help people from all over the world in many ways. And to show the library's beauty.

In this series, the photographer chose to highlight a space that is important to her, the local library. She first presents an image of the front entrance, showing the water feature and the main doors. She distances herself from the main action and documents the general area. The second image is a close-up view of the library shelves. She captures the shelves at a slight angle for a more dynamic viewpoint while the rows of books offers a sense of repetition and movement. The third image is of a larger viewpoint of the library's interior space, showing multiple shelving units and a window. The angle of view that she chose captures strong implied diagonal lines from the shelves, which send the viewer's eyes to the far

window. This series of images demonstrates her understanding of formal compositional rules.



Photograph 4.47 Image of white picket fence by seventeen-year-old boy



Photograph 4.48 Image of neighborhood street by seventeen-year-old boy

I chose to take pictures of the [subdivision name]. The neighborhood has white picket fences that make it seem very farm-like. There is always fresh cut grass in every entrance to the neighborhood. Many trees line up and down the streets shading the sidewalks. There are busy people rushing home from work from their very busy afternoons. Kids play up and down the street and,

as the sun sets, street lights slowly turn on one by one. Living in this neighborhood seems almost like a utopia and very home-like.

Some students chose to focus on the outward appearance of the neighborhoods in this community. This student explored a subdivision that he thought represented a style of life in the town. In his first image, he focused on the white picket fences that surround the community. He shot the fence at an angle, creating a more dynamic viewpoint. The line of dark trees and the white fence merge in the back center of the image, while the trees in the background are framed by an opening in the fence. In the second image, the sun has set. The student captured the blurred motion of the car lights by using a tripod and a longer exposure time. This technique demonstrates his understanding of camera operations and his confidence in shooting in low light situations.



*Photograph 4.49 Image of water tower by seventeen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.50 Image of railroad tracks by seventeen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.51 Image of restaurant by seventeen-year-old girl*

Amidst the busy streets and mega-shopping centers throughout the valley, [our town] keeps up with the hectic schedules of local citizens while retaining an authentic small town feel. [This] road showcases quaint shops and icon of the suburb's beginning. Among these are ...a small restaurant...and the water tower, soaring above the town, visible for miles....[Our town] began as a railroad town and today it is still an active train route. In 2010, many people think that the U.S. is becoming too commercial and fast-paced for its own good, but one look at [our town] will reassure anyone that the small towns of the fifties are still present in our country.

The historic downtown area was another favorite topic. In this series, the photographer captured three iconic images of the town. First, she shot an image of the water tower, one of the surviving structures from the beginnings of the community. She uses a worm's-eye view approach to her composition, slightly angling the camera to create more energy. The second image is of the railroad tracks that run through the town. This time, she crouches down to get a more unique vantage point, forcing the deep perspective of the tracks. Finally, she includes an image of a well-

loved restaurant in the area. She focused on the patio area of the building and composed her photograph so that the light-toned restaurant sign and the white chairs and table balance each other out. Diagonal lines are repeated between the posts and the back curtains.



*Photograph 4.52 Image of Arts Center by seventeen-year-old boy*



*Photograph 4.53 Image of Arts Center patio by seventeen-year-old boy*



*Photograph 4.54 Image of car in junkyard by seventeen-year-old boy*

All the places I have been in my life in [this state], there were a few places that stood out to me. I've lived in [this town] my whole life and I thought about taking pictures of downtown but then thought about things I loved to do and things that happened, and a junkyard popped into my head, as well as the art museum in downtown [neighbor city]. About ten years ago I was driving down [the street]

and I had saw a cat getting chanced by two dogs. I turned around and followed the cat and dogs into a junkyard and I scared the dogs off by yelling at them and hitting a piece of wood on some metal. I then grabbed the cat and brought her home. That's why I chose to take a photo of the junkyard. Then on the other hand, I love art, taking photos, and skating. The art museum has everything I love and I have been going there with my friends and family ever since I was 10 and go there every week.

The story that this student told was much different from most of the student projects because he tells a narrative about his influential spaces in his life. In the first two images, the student focuses on the local arts center. In the first photograph, he captured part of a sunshade and tree on the property. He used a worm's-eye perspective to bring an interesting viewpoint to the composition. The second image was taken from the ground level of the arts center down to the patio level. The repetition of lines creates a balanced perspective. The inclusion of the stair rails in this image is important to this photographer because he is a skateboarder and has been known to use public structures as skate ramps. The final image is of a junkyard in the area. The photograph displays the back of a car beside some weeds. There appears to be a building in the background. The text the photographer included is helpful to define this space as a junkyard, since it is difficult to determine what the space is.



*Photograph 4.55 Image of Mormon temple by fifteen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.56 Image of garden at Mormon temple by fifteen-year-old girl*



*Photograph 4.56 Image of gardens at Mormon temple by fifteen-year-old girl*

The [Mormon] temple serves [our town] and the surrounding areas. One way that the temple serves the community is by growing food in its gardens for the community. The temple workers grow oranges, grapefruit, lettuce, and more. I chose the temple because it has a natural beauty to it and is a very friendly place. The temple grounds are a place where you can learn about the gospel, take a walk, or just sit and think. The temple grounds have a Visitors' Center that is open to the public.

Lastly, a theme that prevailed among the students was their religion. This student based her community project on the Mormon temple. Her family belongs to the church, so they often spend time at this space. She chose to capture the front of the main building in her first image. The composition demonstrates a formal balance, with the building and its reflection in the pool. Instead of placing the building directly in the center, she pushed the building slightly to the left and used the dark palm trees on the right to balance out the space. The next image is a close-up view of one of the vegetable gardens. There is a lack of a strong focal point

in the photograph. The last image is another image of the gardens, but the photographer included more of the surrounding area in the photograph. The ornate decoration on the planters contrast with the more chaotic garden plants.

### Analysis

This study is designed around qualitative methods using an action research approach. The observation and data collection was motivated by my teaching practice and was an attempt to find a more authentic learning experience for my students. After examining the data from the study, I have observed noteworthy moments from the classroom, which led to discovering larger themes that underline the experience. The students became “critical informants” as I shared the research questions and goals of the study with them (Corcoran and Sim, 2009). While the student responses created a collaborative and participatory method to discover the underlying ideas in this study (Heikkinen, 2002), I also found the student-created images as strong indicators of the phenomena at hand.

The student photographs demonstrated a sense of maturity and complexity that I have not witnessed in a beginning photo class before. For example, in Photograph 4.12, the use of elements within the composition to produce a sense of informal balance is mature for this photographer’s skill level. She used the quality and direction of light to enhance her subject, while including details of the girl’s bedroom to help add complexity to her sitter’s personality. In the series of the school

building, which includes Photographs 4.22, 4.23, and 4.24, the fifteen year-old male photographer was able to connect his images of the school building through the repetition of furniture throughout the school building. This repetition (and lack of personal decoration) suggests a monotony and uniformity in the school space. Photographs 4.28, 4.29, and 4.30 show how this female photographer explored the abstract concept of the mother-daughter relationship. Instead of placing her subjects in a formal portrait pose, she allowed her subjects to embrace, play, and interact. The images give a sense of energy and connection that may not have been present in a traditional portrait session. These examples are just a few of the indications of what can occur when the curriculum is designed around social and historical themes that interest adolescent photographers.

Gender differences sometimes appeared in the students' choice of subject matter. The male students' tended to show more aggression and strength in their photos. For example, in Photographs 4.2 and 4.5, the photographers chose to show themselves as tough, independent individuals. The male students' also demonstrated their subjects' disengagement with schooling; in Photograph 4.9, the boys pictured present a sense of rebellion or sense of being uncomfortable with the school culture, while the subjects in Photographs 4.16-18 display a complete lack of interest in the classroom. In contrast, the female photographers tended to create aesthetically pleasing compositions in which the subject is presented in a flattering way. For example,

Photograph 4.7 and 4.11 are about teenage stereotypes, yet the people in the images are depicted in a complimentary way and do not show signs of distress about the topic. Female photographers were also likely to construct their family images with a sentimental perspective. Whether it was the love a of pet (Photograph 4.32}, sister (Photograph 4.42), or a grandparent (Photograph 4.33 and 4.35), the female students were inclined to focus on the positive side of family dynamics.

The technical demands of the course were omnipresent. The traditional learning curve of the camera operations and darkroom processes was a major factor in the course. As with any beginning film photography class (and especially now in the age of digital cameras), the students had to be taught every step to use the cameras, film, and darkroom. The pace of production was slow in the beginning of the semester as the skills were being taught, but went more quickly as the students refined their technique. We still encountered mistakes along the way, for instance the series of images of the great-grandmother displays film processing issues, but the technical problems were nothing different from previous years of teaching this level of photography students. Although I do not have any data to compare, it seemed as if the students actually had fewer problems with the technical aspects of the course this year than in the past.

We reached our curriculum goals of 1) learning about the social and contextual aspects of photography, 2) creating series of photographs based on large themes, and 3) acquiring the technical skills to become proficient

photographers. First, we engaged in research about the theme on which we were focusing. Once I started the dialogue about the historical information about a topic, we would explore other facets of the theme, such as images in current popular culture, movies, or books that relate. Students would continue their research on the Internet and bring in images and other visual artifacts to share. Second, the students successfully created projects that fit with the chosen themes. The projects demonstrated creative approaches to the themes and the students appreciated the freedom of choice to design their series. Their personalities and perspectives on life were reflected in their choices of image capture. Finally, the students became strong photographers. Even though stepped away from the traditional focus of technical skill acquisition, the students met all the skill objectives of a traditional beginning film course. They were able to operate a 35mm camera, load and develop film, and produce prints in the darkroom.

There were some common traits that appeared in the students themselves. The students overall had a much deeper engagement with the curriculum. While they might have complained about the act of researching the topic, they didn't mind if they could do their research on the Internet. The topics kept the students interested in the project since these subjects are personal and important to adolescents. The students were also able to share their perspectives on life with the class. Working with enduring ideas of self, peers, family, school, and community allowed us to dialogue and share our thoughts. The students and I got to know

each other at a much more complex level than a typical classroom. Lastly, the students worked collaboratively to meet the curriculum goals. They shared the classroom space, helping each other load their film and process prints in the darkroom. The teenagers analyzed their rolls of film, often sharing the loupe at the light table to find the perfect image. Because the students knew each other so well, they tended to ask for help from a peer first, before coming to me for additional help. These social phenomenon in the classroom occurred at a much higher rate than in previous years, suggesting that the curriculum design promoted stronger social interaction.

Using the formal approach of grounded theory, categories (which are discussed in depth in Chapter Five) emerged throughout the study. These possible categories were compared across the variety of data to confirm their validity. The categories that emerged are:

- Projects are meaningful to students
- Themes were multifaceted
- School censorship
- Photographs were complex
- Practicality, time, and equipment issues
- Balancing demands of multiple needs

## Summary

This chapter describes the culture of the photography classroom and the projects that took place. I used my field notes and photographs of the classroom to help give the reader a sense of what happened during the semester. I also included the photographs and artist statements to illustrate the quality of work the students created. While there were moments where some students lacked focus, the majority of the semester demonstrated that students were engaged and excited about working with these ideas. In the next chapter, I will define the major themes that appeared during this study and some possible benefits for future secondary photography courses.

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUSION

*“The illiterate of the future will be the person ignorant of the use of the camera as well as of the pen.”*

- Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (as cited in Traub, 2006, p. xiii)

Throughout this study, I have examined the possibility of using social and historical contexts, image analysis, and personal themes to engage adolescent photographers in the craft of photography. Over the course of the semester, the students and I explored a variety of issues that they had interest in by both looking at previous photographs as well as allowing the students to explore ideas by creating their own photographs. Students were asked to reflect upon their art making choices and analyze their perspectives on the subject at hand.

I gathered data from a variety of sources: student writings and photographs, student and teacher interviews, and my own field notes. I used the wide variety of data as a form of triangulation to check for accuracy of what was occurring in the classroom. As a participant observer, I had the ability to understand the phenomenon at hand, while at the same time carefully monitoring my objectiveness on the study. My role as the teacher of these students allowed me access to their perspectives and artwork at a deeper level than if I was an outside researcher.

This chapter describes the major findings I discovered during this study. I found the semester to be both uplifting and frustrating as the students and I negotiated our curriculum and produced projects. Working with adolescents is a unique challenge, one that can be both powerful and draining, but this study revealed some important issues that face educators' approaches to art education in the secondary schools.

### Research Questions Revisited

*1. What does a photography class that focuses on the social and historical aspects of the medium include? How does this class differ from a traditional film class?*

In this study, I incorporated student interests such as identity formation, adolescent stereotypes, issues of schooling, characterizations of family, and defining a sense of community. The students and I studied historical documents and theories as well as fine art examples of how these themes have shaped American culture. Because we were analyzing how imagery affects our understanding of the world around us, basic semiotic and visual culture perspectives were introduced. I incorporated history of the photographic medium, basic science behind the optics of the camera equipment, and technical concerns of camera and darkroom operations.

The class differed from a traditional approach to a film class because the emphasis was centered on exploring larger ideas with a secondary emphasis on technical acquisition. For example, instead of focusing on the students demonstrating their ability to control depth of

field in the camera, we used the technique of depth of field to help emphasize our visualization of family. The technical skill came as a secondary objective to the project. Since I structured the class around thematic issues, the students and I were able to incorporate dialogue about why we were creating images, how to visualize our perspectives, and how to appreciate other's viewpoints. Students consistently remarked that they enjoyed learning about one another's lives and how photography plays in our daily existence. As one student states, "I like the way we incorporate our lives and education with creativity. You learn as well as have fun."

*2. How do students respond to this approach in the photography curriculum? How do other photography teachers, who are teaching a more traditional, skills-based photography program, respond to this project?*

Students responded favorably to the new curriculum (see Appendix G, *Summary of Curriculum Design Check #1 Given to Students*, Appendix H, *Summary of Curriculum Design Check #2 Given to Students*, and Appendix I, *Sample of Comments From End of Study Student Interview*). While these students were new to the medium of photography, the level of engagement and excitement was much higher than previous years that I taught. Common responses to the curriculum were:

- "I like what we have to take photos of because they are fun and enjoyable" (female, age 15)

- “[In this class], I like how we can show who we really are” (female, age 16)
- “How free we are to take pictures. We are given a topic, but that’s about the only boundaries there are, so I really get to take photos that inspire me” (female, age 15)

The biggest impact that the new curriculum had on the students was the quality of their intent. Their photos had deeper meaning and stronger impact than previous semesters. Instead of photographs of soda cans on tables or their friend jumping off a bench at the school to demonstrate basic technical skills, the students produced captivating images of themselves, their friends and families, and their community. Included with these images were thoughtful responses to their images, which spoke of teenage angst, the power of family, and their exploration of place.

The teachers whom I interviewed responded positively to the study. Even though they have their own philosophies of how to develop curriculum for adolescent photography students, their overall goals for their students reflect the overarching themes of the new curriculum design. One educator is a classically trained photographer, who shifted his focus to secondary and higher education after a career as a professional photographer. Although his curriculum for beginning photography students reflects a traditional approach to the media, he feels that photography is a tool to help students become critical thinkers in an “ever-changing global society”. He hopes that after students take his course,

they can “look around their neighborhood [and see] they can do something that is needed in their own community” (interview 11/10/10).

The other educator also is a highly trained professional photographer who has taught all levels from kindergarten to higher education in both the visual arts and academic subjects. His curriculum also reflects a traditional approach, but hopes that students “enjoyed photography and respect it and understand what it takes to make a good photograph.” When asked to elaborate on what students should understand when creating photographs, he responds, “[the students] are editing the world and this is what [they] are showing us. This is what [they] think is important” (interview 12/8/10). Due to the timeline of the study, I did not have the opportunity to share my students’ images with the teachers and discuss the major themes of the study, however, I am fairly confident that they would be interested in the results. It would be worth noting if they would change any part of their curriculum to incorporate some of these new thematic projects.

### *3. How does this approach to photography meet the technical demands of the medium?*

Although the focus was not a pure technical approach, we did meet the curriculum demands set by the district. The students learned basic camera operations, film development, print processing, and presentation techniques. Even though the projects were centered on large thematic issues, technical skills were introduced with each assignment. In

photography courses, it is essential to teach the technical skills of the medium in order for the students to learn how to creatively control the camera. Creative control allows the student to visualize their ideas; without knowledge of how the camera functions or can be manipulated limits the photographer's ability to produce a unique perspective in his or her work.

At the start of this study, I was concerned that I would not be able to maintain our focus on social themes because we would need to spend so much time learning the technical demands of the course. The students soon proved me wrong; their intuitive nature spurred them to experiment and figure out some of the technical demands on their own. While we had an initial learning curve with working with film and manual cameras, the students took their digital photography skills and applied them to the older camera format, especially with compositional techniques. I felt that the students were more engaged with learning technical skills when I taught the skills as a way of giving them choices as to how to frame their ideas, rather than just having the students prove to me that they could compose an image using short depth of field, stopped motion, etc.

#### *4. What evidence of student learning of social and historical practices in photography appears?*

Evidence of student learning of social and historical practices appeared quite often during the semester, most often in the responses they submitted with each project. In the teenager project, students commented

on perceptions of teenagers by adults, expectations that society places upon them, and how teenagers are more complex beings than they are given credit for. In the schooling project, there were statements about the severe architecture of the school building, what learning looks like, and how students alter the purpose of the school spaces for their own needs. The family project, our favorite and most emotional assignment, offered students the opportunity to share the complexities of the modern family – split homes, single parents, lack of parents, and multi-generational living were presented as issues of concerns for the students. Finally, the community project had the students analyzing what parts of the town they live in have the most influence on them. Students commented on the history of the town, what parts of town they deemed to be quintessential, and how the spaces have molded them into whom they are now.

Students also retained the historical aspects of the themes we studied. For example, they would consistently mention a teenager stereotype they encountered in a movie or television show or bring in historic or humorous family photos they discovered at home. They remembered learning about the factory model of American schooling and how the town got its start. The students had made connections of the topics we studied to their other coursework, mentioning that they studied family dynamics in psychology or Victorian England in their history class and how they were able to contribute to the conversation with the knowledge they learned from photography class.

Moreover, students gained the perspective of social status; photography was only available to the upper class until Kodak introduced the Brownie camera in the 1910s. Even then, photography for the masses, and the perspective of an ordinary person, are recent revolutions. We spent time discussing what subjects were deemed important enough to take photographs of and who was doing the picture taking. The idea of who was not photographed becomes equally important in the discussion, especially when presenting images of the past; questions of why African American, Hispanic, Native American, or Asian people were not shown as well as the perspective of how these non-White people were represented in historic images was discussed. We also examined the lack of female photographers and their limited access to the medium. These conversations were a necessary and vital part of our curriculum.

*5. How can this approach to teaching photography benefit the students?*

I believe this approach to teaching photography benefits the students because it provides a more interdisciplinary approach to the medium, allowing students to explore issues and ideas that are connected to them. It provides an outlet for students to discover how they see their place in the world and, more importantly, allows them to see how fellow students view the world. Photography has a wide scope of influence on our culture – news media, popular culture, fine art, and the everyday person all use photography to visualize what is important to them. Learning how imagery affects our perceptions and choices as a society is

invaluable for the twenty-first century student. Becoming a stronger photographer allows the student to create images that are personalized and meaningful. Image making gives the student power to voice their ideas. The students in this study were proud of the work they created ( see Appendix I, *Sample of Comments From the End Of Study Student Interview*) and were engaged in the larger, more conceptual ideas of photo imaging.

*6. How do students gain control over their creation and meaning making in their photographs?*

Students gain control over their creation and meaning making in their photographs by acquiring knowledge about the history of the medium and its impact on our culture(s). Combining this knowledge with technical understanding of the camera assists the student to be more aware of the choices they make and how others might view their images. Active dialogues about what students produced and how they read to the viewer and examination of work by professional photographers aided the student in understanding how to create effective images. Ultimately, the written reflection of each student about his or her work and the work of others helped students cement their understanding of image making and how it fits into the larger social picture.

## Emerging Themes

### *Theme #1: Projects Were Meaningful to Students*

Students had a positive reaction to the topics chosen for study.

Comments such as:

- “I liked [the “I Am” Portrait] project because we had to reveal a secret about ourselves and we found out a lot about our classmates as well”
- “I enjoyed capturing photos of my family because I am capturing pictures of my own blood and I can see myself in my pictures through the faces of my family”, and
- “[I liked the project of] teenage stereotypes – I got to explore how people feel”

demonstrates the strength of the themes that were chosen. Just as the students felt that they learned about their peers through these projects, I got the chance to know these students on a deeper level, thus, I had a stronger relationship with my students. While not tested, as a teacher, I felt that this semester showed a stronger bond within the classes as well as a more committed student involvement and ownership for the course. When students and the teacher are committed to the class, the chance for authentic learning can take place (Goessling and Doyle, 2009; Zenko and Harmon, 2009). More importantly, Walker (2001) suggests that students need a personal connection to the issue to create

meaningful work. This connection to the semester's projects brings up the next theme, the time invested in the art-making process.

*Theme #2: Projects were Multifaceted*

Centering an art course on big ideas brings complexity and the realization that the art-making process takes a longer time than traditional skills-based projects. In order to work with the ideas of the self, teenagers, school, family, and community, we had to take the time to study the context and historical phenomena that took place about this idea. For example, to study the issue of teenagers, we had to define what a teenager is, where the term comes from, and what role teenagers have played in society. We then had to discuss what a stereotype is and how teenagers can be viewed as a stereotype in American culture. Next, we examined images of teenagers and the students independently analyzed additional images for meaning. Finally, the students needed to process all this information and produce their own series of images and text based on the idea of teenage stereotype. All of the preliminary research and analysis were needed for students to be successful in their art making and reflective portions of the project.

Revolving our curriculum around larger themes, or “big ideas” caused a shift in the intensity of focus for these beginning students.

Walker (2001) stated:

Big ideas – broad, important human issues – are characterized by complexity, ambiguity, contradiction, and multiplicity. Big ideas are

what can expand student art making concerns beyond technical skills, formal choices, and media manipulation to human issues and conceptual concerns. Big ideas can engage students to deeper levels of thinking. (p. 1).

The students and I explored social and historical ideas in the medium of photography (identity, stereotypes, schooling, family, and community) that also are personal in character. By asking students to examine themes of a personal nature to adolescents, the students rose above the traditional expectations for a beginning photography student and began to demonstrate more complex artistic practice.

### *Theme #3: School Censorship*

Schools and the communities they serve have distinct rules about what subject matter is appropriate to introduce to students. These rules are usually reflected in the rules of conduct for students, but there are also hidden, implied expectations from the administration and the community at large. The high school photography class is not exempt from this paradigm. During this semester, we encountered many moments when the boundaries of acceptable school art and meaningful student works came into conflict.

One example is when we worked with the theme of teenagers. While students were researching images that depicted teenagers, they came across images of alcohol and drug use as well as photos of sexual activity. The school district, and most parents in general, frown upon students using these images for an assignment as they both break school

rules on these topics as well as highlight negative activities for youth. Although the district has a “safe search” filter on the Internet programs, mature images pop up frequently during an image search. During this time, I had to explain to the students that although these issues are important and are relevant for teenagers, we could not print any image of drug and alcohol use, pregnancy, or violence. It was at this moment when I realized that it is difficult to operate a true social justice platform within a public school because of the school district and parents’ desire to protect children from the more mature topics of the real world. As a parent myself, I can sympathize with the adults in this case, but it concerns me that the freedom to explore crucial issues in teenagers’ lives is censored or limited.

The family project brought its own challenges. The deaths of close family members (the grandfathers and the little sister) were very difficult to work through. One student who lost her grandfather took images of the gathering after the funeral, but decided to reshoot because she did not want to work with these images that were reminders of her family’s sadness. The student who lost her sister did create an image from her likeness, but did not want to share what happened with her and her family – we did not use her images in the critique. I had a few students who shot images that were unacceptable to use in a school situation; for example, a few students captured their older family members drinking alcohol. Another showed his brother in only a pair of shorts (which violates the school dress code). When speaking with these students, they did not

realize that the subject matter was inappropriate; they were just capturing everyday moments with their families. Any student who, defined by the school, had inappropriate images, were asked to print other frames instead. In hindsight, I should have asked for permission from the school district and parents to allow students to work with more mature concepts of the themes we were studying. It would be interesting to discover what could happen if a researcher who conducts a similar study can receive permission for adolescent photographers to work within a school setting without any censorship.

#### *Theme #4: Photographs Were Complex*

As I examined the images created over the semester, I concluded that the student photographs were strong in composition and complex in meaning. From the very first project of the self-portrait, students displayed a more mature eye for arranging the elements in the composition to produce a strong focal point. Typically, beginning photography students tend to place their main subject in the middle of their composition with empty space filling the rest of the image, but the students in this study did not exemplify this behavior. This could be due to the fact that many have digital cameras and have previous experience taking photos. However, I propose that there is also an indication the students were more interested and informed in the subject matter of the study's projects and thus, examined their viewpoints more critically as they shot their images.

Knowledge about the subject also caused the images to be richer in meaning. Having the students examine the social and historical approaches to the topics of teenagers, family, school, and communities allowed the students to gain a deeper understanding of the theme at hand. Students consistently mentioned historical and contemporary viewpoints we studied throughout the semester, especially when they were reflecting upon their image making. Depictions of teenagers became contrasts to the idea of the teenager as a “rebel”, family photography reflected blended families and isolation, school images focused on the “factory model” approach to schooling and community images recalled an early age of a small town. Even without the reflective responses that the students submitted with their images, the photographs stand on their own as critical explorations of the students’ world.

*Theme #5: Practicality, Time and Equipment Issues*

As with any school setting, there are limitations to what educators can offer for learning experiences. Budget constraints are a large concern for school programs; while the students pay a forty-dollar fee in the photo class to pay for supplies each semester, this money does not cover all the material and chemical needs of the class. Prices for traditional film photography have soared due to only a few companies offering darkroom chemistry and supplies anymore. If a student uses up his or her allotment of paper and film, they must pay for extra supplies. Some students and parents balk at the idea of paying more (or cannot afford it), so oftentimes

we have to stop producing prints for a project in order to save supplies for the next one. This decision affects the quality of the students' work, as they do not have the ability to refine their photographs or retake their film as much as they would like.

There is also the issue of practicality. Some of my classes contained thirty-four students and included two levels of students, beginning and advanced. It is difficult to give much one-on-one attention to this number of students, not even considering the fact that some of them are completing an Advanced Placement portfolio and need additional individualized attention. The large number of students also gave everyone less time on the limited number of cameras and enlargers, restricting their ability to refine their craft even more. Since we were working with complex issues, it was also a challenge to work with everyone individually to make sure they were on the right track. Sometimes, I was not sure exactly what direction some students were working toward, as they were quieter students who were drowned out by the demands of their more aggressive classmates.

We also dealt with time constraints. At the public high school, there are always the normal distractions of pep assemblies, half-days, and testing. We had students missing class for sports tournaments, performing arts concerts, and field trips. Furthermore, time was limited due to the structure of the school day; the class runs every day for fifty minutes and this proves to be a challenge. Film development can easily run over an hour, producing a print can take thirty minutes, shooting a roll

of film can take hours – when you add set-up time and clean up for the students, there just isn't much time in each class session to produce work. There were moments that I needed to give extra time to a project and push back due dates, which ultimately caused the elimination of the last proposed project, *Issues of Global Concerns*, which was focused on larger societal issues in our culture.

Finally, as with many school programs, we had equipment constraints. Working in a district with severe budget cuts, our capital item requests and repair budget requests have been denied for the past few years. Our inventory of film cameras is limited; currently we have twenty-two cameras for one hundred and fifty students. To work with this small inventory, students are allowed to checkout a camera for one night only, which takes about two to two and a half weeks to cycle through all the classes. Add to this the fact that only half the class can use the darkroom at one time and one can see how it takes quite a while to complete a project in class. We also encountered problems with the darkroom equipment itself. During the summer, the maintenance staff replaced the ceiling lights with stronger wattage bulbs; this caused our printing paper to fog. It took over a month for the correct light bulbs to be ordered and installed into the room – in the meantime, the students and I devised a way to “tent” the enlarger stations to block the light to the easel.

It is only a matter of time before film-based photography is removed from the high school course offerings, so one may argue that a lack of equipment is a moot point. However, digital equipment is

expensive to purchase and maintain as well, with most digital single-lens reflex cameras starting at nine hundred dollars. It is difficult to give students the opportunity to refine and mature their image making when they do not have access to proper photography equipment.

*Theme #6: Balancing Demands of Multiple Needs*

Finally, as with any school program, there are multiple demands placed upon the curriculum. Besides the National Visual Arts Standards, the state of Arizona has its own visual art standards for schools to follow. These standards are fairly open to a wide variety of options to cover the material, but they still decree certain objectives for the class. If a teacher is CTE certified, there are yet more standards imposed upon the curriculum. The CTE standards are vocationally based, thus students need to demonstrate job-based skills and technical competencies; meaning making and artistic practice are not a concern in this approach. Since I am not currently CTE certified, I did not include CTE demands when planning this course.

Furthermore, the school district has its own set of objectives that are loosely based on the state and CTE standards. The district standards were written by the teachers themselves, including me, and were designed by what we are capable of offering the students. For example, digital technology is not introduced in the beginning photo class because some schools do not have access to the equipment. The school itself has another set of expectations for the course. The school leadership team has decided

that the staff will focus on the ideas of rigor, relevance, and relationships when planning their curriculum. This approach to curriculum development is authored by the International Center for Leadership in Education<sup>10</sup>. Rigor is defined by the quality of curriculum being offered, relevance speaks to connecting the curriculum to real world examples, and relationships reminds teachers to forge connections with their students.

Another set of demands comes from the parents. The community that the school serves is fairly conservative, so the approach to education tends to be on the conservative side as well. Educators at this school have to think about the community as a whole when planning their lessons. This places a restriction on the topics we cover and oftentimes, a deterrent for teaching contemporary art of a political or controversial nature. An example of this censorship is a project about food consumption that another teacher wanted to have his students do. After talking about “freegans”, or people who collect unwanted, consumable food and products from dumpsters, he invited students to look into the local dumpsters and photograph what people had thrown away. Almost immediately the parent calls came in, angry that the teacher suggest his students dig food out of dumpsters and eat it. While he canceled the project for that year, he has revised the lesson to examine the amount of wasted food in the students’ homes, a much less controversial approach to over-consumption. It is often easier and safer for an art teacher in this district to teach lessons based on elements and principles of design and

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.leadered.com/rrr.html>

focus on the Western Canon of artists than to introduce contemporary art or current issues into the classroom.

Lastly there is my teaching philosophy to consider. After years of teaching and study in education and the arts, I have a complex perspective on what is important to impart in an art class. There are some concepts, such as meaning making and image analysis, that I believe are crucial to a strong art education for secondary students. I am not a classically trained photographer; unlike my peers who have gone to school for photography, I have learned most of my technical skills on the job. I tend to approach the medium of photography from an art education perspective rather than a technical or trade school approach. All of this colors my judgment about what to introduce or ignore for the course.

### Benefits of this Approach to Photography Curriculum Design

#### *Benefit #1: Building Relationships*

One of the main benefits that developed out of this study is the building of relationships within the classroom. The project themes were all of a personal nature and in order to complete the assignment, students had to share their individual perspectives on the topic. For an authentic response, students must feel safe in sharing their work with others. For this study to be successful, students needed to feel comfortable in the classroom working with their peers and me.

Teachers' relationships with students are reflected in the students' engagement with the projects (Zenkov and Harmon, 2009). This is not to say that the students want the teacher to be a friend, but instead, be an adult who is interested in the student as an individual and can guide him or her to becoming a stronger student (Goessling and Doyle, 2009). The better the bond between the teacher and student, the more engaged the student should be. I worked on building these personal relationships by providing one-on-one teaching time with each student as well as taking time to learn about their outside interests. Every class period I made an attempt to ask students how they did in their team sport, what they did at their club meeting, or how their shift at work went. In tandem, I shared my outside life with them by telling stories about my children, what I did when I was a teenager, and what movies or other popular culture I experienced. These personal connections helped promote a sense of security and respect within the classroom.

The students themselves needed to feel open with one another as well. The classes are a mix of all four grades as well as academic skill levels. There is always a large mix of personalities and social groups within the room. Spending time to connect these students to one another is imperative. Group bonding and team building activities can reinforce connections between the students and help foster a sense of community (Wilson, DASHO, Martin, Wallerstein, Wang, and Minkler, 2007; Zenkov and Harmon, 2009; Goessling and Doyle, 2009). The need for these group activities became especially important as we implemented group

critiques at the end of each project. The first few critique sessions were carefully orchestrated in order to guide the students in respectful analysis of their peer's photographs. Ultimately, a photography class is an arena filled with social collaborations; students need to share equipment and space as they create their photographs and work side-by-side in the darkroom and the developing counter. All of these relationship-building activities help create a caring environment in which the students helped each other and we were able to share our thoughts and artwork in a positive manner. Moreover, as Eisner (2001) declares, "the teaching of art is more than the teaching of art. Ultimately we are concerned with students and their overall development as well as their particular development in the arts" (p. 10). Even if many of the photography students do not pursue a career as a professional photographer, they will profit from a gained appreciation for photography, and the positive experience of building relationships with their peers and teacher.

### *Benefit #2: Enduring Ideas*

Another benefit that resonated in this study is the curriculum being designed around large themes. The projects were purposely devised around personal interests of the students to promote deeper investigation within the course. Stewart and Walker (2005) call working these larger themes of identity, relationships, and environment "enduring ideas." Designing curriculum around enduring ideas is nothing new, but the approach allows the teacher to link academic content to "life-focused

issues” (p.25). Moreover, when students are asked to explore these themes, they find their learning more meaningful and become deeply engaged in their scholarship (Hunter, 1982; Efland, 2002).

Working with big ideas involves complexity, contradiction, and ambiguity. Adolescents’ cognitive ability allows them to balance these multiple layers within enduring ideas and understand that the “truth”, much like photographic representation, is not always black and white (Erikson, 1968). Moreover, structuring the projects around larger concepts can bring maturity to the students’ point of view. Goessling and Doyle (2009) argue that, “the power of imagination and creative expression, when used in a reflective process, can pave the way for new insights and understandings” (p. 345). This process of reflection can lead to a deeper understanding of the students’ sense of self and their community (Strack, Magill, and Mcdonagh, 2004).

Furthermore, using the medium of photography is a natural fit with the study of enduring ideas. Lovett (2006) stated:

Education through media can illuminate stories and youth knowledge about their worlds that may have gone otherwise unnoticed. By our vision and interaction with the world we selectively frame, angle, reflect, and focus. And when someone asks us (or we ask ourselves) what we see, the moment is captured – ‘frozen’- and available to be used in making more meaningful connections to our world (p. 187).

Photography allows us to stop the passage of time and study an event more closely to determine meaning. The adolescent student can have time to refine their understanding of how their image and the images of others are

perceived. The still photograph allows them to frame what is important to them.

### *Benefit #3: Understanding Images*

With this focus on enduring ideas, students also need to understand how to comprehend the visual communication of images. As discussed in Chapter Two, photographs have multiple layers of meaning. If the photography course only covers technical aspects of the medium, the social and historical implication of imagery is ignored (Barrett, 1990); the students become strong technicians, but ill-prepared to decode images for meaning. Freedman (2000) stated, “art must be represented in education as a social statement, in a social context, from social perspectives. A conceptual, social space exists between images, through which people make contact” (p. 326). This holds especially true for working with the themes that I chose for this study.

Besides providing an arena for dialogue on social and historical aspects, students need to be introduced to the denotations and connotations of images. The denotative, or descriptive, and the connotative, or symbolic, functions of an image are connected to the social and historical aspects of photographs (Barthes, 1982; Sutton, 2007). While denotation and connotation are complex theories to present to adolescents, the students are capable of grasping the basic understanding of this concept. To reinforce these understandings, students must have what Walker (2001) called “conscious exploration” or active reflection

during and after the creation of artworks. The students critically examined their subject matter both before and after the production of their photographs, looking for ways to present their perspective on the topic at hand. We compared and contrasted images, sketched ideas for compositions, critiqued images for technique and meaning, and wrote reflective texts during various points in the projects. Through a consistent pattern of pausing to question what we were looking at and creating, we were able to find connections and arrive at a deeper awareness of the project at hand.

#### *Benefit #4: Social Justice with Middle-Class Students*

Literature about social justice in photography education typically examines PhotoVoice programs that work with disadvantaged people (Goessling and Doyle, 2009; Wilson, et. al., 2009; Zenkov and Harmon, 2009). However, the typical adolescent can also be empowered by learning to develop their “voice” through photography. Teenagers do not have the right to vote, most cannot drive, and they are still under the control of their parents, but they can begin thinking how their voices can influence change (Mancina, 2005). Maxine Greene (1995) called this “wide-awakeness” or the awareness of the world around us. There is the hope that when students leave our programs, they can take this awareness with them. As Bomer (1999) contended, “we want students to be able to continue their dialogues with the world beyond the time that we know them. In order to do so, they need to know how to identify problems and

possibilities, to think about given realities while envisioning better potential worlds” (p. 8).

This study is different from many social justice projects in the fact that it involved middle class children. These students are not considered a high-risk population; many of them will go to college and lead middle-class lives. While the majority of them will not go on to be professional photographers (Newberry, 1997), the skills they learn in this course can be applied to other modes of being. Most importantly, these students are the future politicians and business people who will make the decisions for the less fortunate. For middle class students, the act of knowing their access and privilege allows them to see how power is structured in society (Applebaum, 2008; Jang, 2010). It is my hope that being “wide-awake” will spur them to enact change in our society for the better.

### Conclusion

Throughout this project, I have attempted to support my premise that students want to go beyond a skills-based approach to art education. They came alive while working with big ideas that were important to them. Their images had energy to them and were full of personal meaning. Wells (2004) contended that photography students should:

engage consciously with questions of photographic meaning in order to develop critical perceptions which can be brought to bear upon photographic practices, historically and now, or upon [their] own photography (p. 4).

The students in this study did start to make connections with the photographs they were creating to the larger context of the social and historical aspects to photographic practice. They were able to do basic decoding of images and started to understand how the photographer can embed meaning into their work through the use of composition, camera technique, and symbols. Furthermore, the students were able to get to know one another through their images, leading to a stronger community within the classroom.

While this study took place in a film-based photography course, the overall findings can be transferred to a digital imaging course and to other art courses offered to adolescents. With the world becoming ever more inter-connected, students are hungry to find their place in their community and explore the issues that interest them. Traub (2006) argued that:

students and educators must seriously examine the changes outside the camera's viewfinder, the powerful forces beyond craft that are altering and reshaping ways of seeing, showing, and distributing photographs (p. xiii)

This study's curriculum helped students place their learning within a context and see how photography has played a role in history, while becoming practicing photographers/artists.

Although working with adolescents is sometimes like a ride on a roller coaster, I felt that we were successful in our learning. There were frustrating moments, but overall, it was a very positive experience. The study may have had different outcomes if the students were free to explore

mature topics that affect their lives and had more time to critically examine each topic at hand. The short time-line of one semester and the sheer amount of students inhibited our ability to work as individuals at our own pace.

Nevertheless, the photographs created during the semester were authentic perspectives from the students. This follows Roberts' (2005) argument that:

art classes should not be a rehearsal for making real art. Nor should they be technical workshops where students learn about skills and tools that they may use later in a meaningful way (p. 43).

Using enduring ideas allowed these beginning students to create meaningful photographs immediately, rather than waiting until a high level of technical skills was acquired. Furthermore, the new curriculum design fit well into the school's new mission statement<sup>11</sup>, an unintentional, but positive result. Although there is always a need for refinement, I will continue to redirect my curriculum towards this model of engaging students.

In today's constantly shifting world, it is difficult for students to find their identity and sense of place. Photography can help provide voice and shape to individual's needs, developing their ability to communicate and think in a visual mode. However photo courses, such as the one I teach, are modeled on 35mm film technology, not twenty-first century photographic concepts. These courses are not meeting the needs of

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<sup>11</sup> The school adapted the Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships model (see footnote 9).

contemporary students. Lyons (2006) proposed that photography education is at a critical stage in its development; we must reconcile the ever-changing technology with the underlying ideas of visual imaging. He stated:

the curricula in the future not be media specific, but reflect the integration of cross-disciplinary concerns, and...that we seriously entertain a total integration of 'tools' as applied to the expressive potential of images and text in our future attempts to manage, explore, exploit, and interpret the proliferation of images that represent the genetic code of culture (p. 183-4).

I contend that this study is a step in this direction. During the semester of the study, I felt I had helped build these tools for my students as we explored their immediate world. I have demonstrated that a high school educator can bring a more engaged, critical examination of photography practice to adolescents through a modified approach to the traditional curriculum of beginning photography program.

More importantly, however, is the fact that the study took place in a suburban high school with public high school students. Photography educators who work in similar situations can apply these findings to further evolve curriculum for the contemporary student. The possibilities for future refinement of secondary photo imaging programs are tremendous if photo educators are responsive to the technological and social forces that continually reshape the practice of photography.

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APPENDIX A  
IRB APPROVAL

**To:** Bernard Young  
ART

**From:** Mark Roosa, Chair *SM*  
Soc Beh IRB

**Date:** 08/06/2010

**Committee Action:** Expedited Approval

**Approval Date:** 08/06/2010

**Review Type:** Expedited F7

**IRB Protocol #:** 1007005365

**Study Title:** Reflective Photographic Practice: Developing Socially Engaged Student Photographers

**Expiration Date:** 08/05/2011

The above-referenced protocol was approved following expedited review by the Institutional Review Board.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without approval by the Institutional Review Board.

**Adverse Reactions:** If any untoward incidents or severe reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Soc Beh IRB immediately. If necessary a member of the IRB will be assigned to look into the matter. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending IRB review.

**Amendments:** If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, or the investigators, please communicate your requested changes to the Soc Beh IRB. The new procedure is not to be initiated until the IRB approval has been given.

Please retain a copy of this letter with your approved protocol.

## **CONSENT FORM**

### *Reflective Photographic Practice: Developing Socially Engaged Student Photographers*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The purposes of this form are to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.

#### **RESEARCHERS**

Dr. Bernard Young, Professor of Art Education, School of Art, Arizona State University and Alexandra Overby, doctoral candidate has invited your participation in a research study.

#### **STUDY PURPOSE**

The purpose of the research is to examine the affects of focusing the photography curriculum on social and historical aspects of the medium, rather than just technical skill acquisition.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY**

If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving research in the development of relevant photo imaging curriculum for secondary students. Your involvement involves an interview session; you may skip or not answer any question given to you that you do not want to answer.

If you say YES, then your participation will last for forty-five minutes at your classroom. You will be asked to describe your experience learning to be a photographer and teacher and also share your thoughts about photography education. Approximately 8 teachers and 130 students from the GPS district will be participating in this study.

#### **RISKS**

There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

#### **BENEFITS**

Although there may be no direct benefits to you, the possible benefits of your participation in the research are creating a new perspective to developing photography curriculum for secondary students that uses current technology and issues rather than the traditional model of film based photo imaging.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Alexandra Overby will replace all personal identifiers with code names. The data will be housed in a secure location at the ASU School of Art.

#### **WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is ok for you to say no. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and withdraw from the study at any time.

If you withdraw from the study, your transcript and audio recording will be destroyed immediately.

**COSTS AND PAYMENTS**

There is no payment for your participation in the study.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT**

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by Alexandra Overby.

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965 6788.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given (offered) to you.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature                      Printed Name                      Date

**INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT**

"I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participation in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature. These elements of Informed Consent conform to the Assurance given by Arizona State University to the Office for Human Research Protections to protect the rights of human subjects. I have provided (offered) the subject/participant a copy of this signed consent document."

Signature of Investigator \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

ASU IRB  
Approved  
Sig SM  
Date 80610 - 80511

*Reflective Photographic Practice: Developing Socially Engaged Student Photographers*

PARENTAL LETTER OF PERMISSION

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Bernard Young in the Department of Art Education (School of Art) at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to design the photography curriculum to the interests of secondary students.

I am inviting your child's participation, which will involve sharing their photographs and written statements and participating in group discussions about photography. I will also invite students to participate in a taped interview about their work.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to have your child participate or withdraw your child from the study at any time, there will be no penalty to their grade. Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research study may be published, but your child's name and identity will not be used.

During your son/daughter's participation in this research study, *Reflective Photographic Practice: Developing Socially Engaged Student Photographers*, your child will be creating photographs as well as being photographed working in the classroom. All original artwork will be returned to your child.

Although there may be no direct benefit to your child, the possible benefit of your child's participation is the creation of a new approach to teaching the medium of photography to secondary students. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your child's participation.

Students' artwork and responses will be coded for confidentiality. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your child's name and Identity will not be known. The signature section below asks for three different levels of permission; please read carefully and sign for the areas that you give consent for your child to participate.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call me at (480) 235-1291.

Sincerely,

Alexandra M. Overby

ASU IRB Approved	
Sig	<u>SM</u>
Date	<u>0806/10 - 0805/11</u>

I give consent for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Printed Name Date

I give consent for my child to be photographed and for the photographs to be used for a dissertation study and for academic presentations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Printed Name Date

I give consent for my child to be interviewed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Printed Name Date

If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Assent Form – Students

*Reflective Photographic Practice: Developing Socially Engaged Student Photographers*

I have been informed that my parent(s)/guardian(s) have given permission for me to participate in a study about what I think about photography and my photography class.

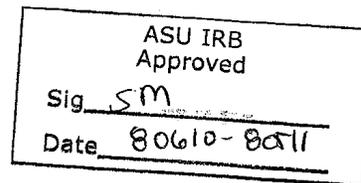
I will be asked to share my photographs and writing and to also participate in discussions about photography. I might have an interview with Mrs. Overby about my opinions on learning to be a photographer. The activities will occur during class time, except for the one-on-one interview, which would be after school.

My participation in this project is voluntary. I have been told that I may stop my participation in this study at any time. If I choose not to participate, it will not affect my grade in any way. I have the right to not allow my photographs to be used in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



APPENDIX B

DISTRICT COURSE OBJECTIVES FOR PHOTO IMAGING 1

## District Objectives for Photo Imaging I

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

Identify parts and functions of the camera
Demonstrate proper use and operation of a Single Lens Reflex 35 mm camera
Illustrate how the relationship between light and film to produce correctly exposed negatives and prints
Apply proper film development techniques when processing film
Apply proper printing techniques when developing photographs
Demonstrate basic print manipulation such as dodging, burning, and contrast filters
Demonstrate safe practices while using photographic equipment including darkroom, cameras, and chemicals
Describe major themes in the history of photography
Identify and integrate the elements and principles of art in own artwork
Demonstrates ability to analyze, interpret, and evaluate the aesthetic quality of a photograph
Apply critical thinking using problem solving skills and logical reasoning when creating photographs
Assess strengths and weaknesses of own photographs
Prepare a portfolio reflecting a progression of work
Demonstrate proper presentation techniques

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What did you like about the “I Am” Portrait?
2. What did you like about the Teenager Project?
3. What do you remember about the history of teenagers as a subject in photographs?
4. What did you like about the School Project?
5. What do you remember about the history of schooling as a subject in photographs?
6. What did you like about the family project?
7. What do you remember about the history of family as a subject in photographs?
8. What did you like about the community project?
9. What do you remember about the history of Gilbert/community as a subject in photographs?

## APPENDIX D

### SAMPLE TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did you learn to be a photographer?
2. What made you decide to be a photography educator?
3. What training did you have to be a photo teacher?
4. What concepts are vital to teach to secondary photography students?
5. How do you structure your curriculum?
6. Please share a few successful lessons with me. Why do they work so well?
7. Do you structure lessons around students' interests? Why or why not?
8. How do you engage students in becoming active participants in the practice of photography?
9. How do you think digital technology has affected the practice of photography?
10. How have you altered your curriculum to include digital photography?
11. What is the role of traditional film-based photography in this digital age?
12. If money and time were not concerns, how would you construct your photography curriculum? Your classroom?
13. What role does a photography class have in educating students about visual literacy?

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE OF COMMENTS FROM END OF STUDY STUDENT  
INTERVIEW

### Final Questions

1. What was your favorite project last semester? Why?
2. Of all the images you created last semester, which one are you most proud of (please describe)? Why?
3. Last semester, what was the best part of the class for you? Why?

### Student Responses

1. My Favorite project was the family one because I got to explore my families' hobbies more, and it was pretty easy.
  2. I'm proud of the picture of my little sister smelling a flower. I really liked this one because I loved the composition in it and the contrast.
  3. The best part was when we got to work in groups. I liked it because I got to know my classmates better.
- 
1. My favorite project was the last one because my photos turned out really good and I like working with landscapes.
  2. The photo I am most proud of is the one with the slide with the palm tree in front, creating a slight framing. It is my favorite because it has good contrast, it came out clear, and I love how the photo turned out.
  3. The best part of the class was being able to work on my own time and at my own pace. It helps me to get my projects done and not stress.
- 
1. When we were able to go around the community and take photos. It was my favorite because I got a lot of good pictures.
  2. The image I am most proud of would be the one of my brother. It was a spur of the moment picture of him working on his truck. I liked all of the detail I captured in the image.
  3. I would say the best part of class was printing the images. I like being able to do it myself and figuring out the contrast.
- 
1. When we got to take pictures of ourselves. I liked that project because we had to reveal a secret about ourselves and we found out a lot about our classmates as well.

2. The one I am most proud of is the one I took of my grandma and aunt on the quad. It was a good picture and it captured a memory. It was a natural picture. There was no posing.
  3. I liked to go out and take the pictures. It let's you be creative then when you develop it is exciting to see what you came up with.
1. My favorite project was the family one because no one has the same family and you could make it your own.
  2. One of my favorites was the one of my family and the background was black and there were a string of lights in the background because it was unique.
  3. The best part was getting to develop pictures and see how they turn out.
1. The family one cause I learned more about my family.
  2. The one with my lil' bro playing basketball cause I love basketball.
  3. The chill days cause you didn't have to do anything.
1. My favorite project was the family pictures. I liked seeing everyone else's family and how they feel about them.
  2. I am most proud of a picture I printed of my sister with my dog. The lighting and composition came out really well.
  3. I liked being able to create our own work, we had the freedom to choose what we wanted to shoot.
1. I liked the community project the most. It was my favorite because it was open-ended and you could choose your topic.
  2. Of all of the images I created, I am most proud of the picture with my sister and my dog. The picture is clear and sharp and the lighting is good.
  3. The best part of class last semester was printing photos in the darkroom. I liked it because it was fun working with the enlargers and you get to see how your photos turned out.
1. The community, because I got to go around Gilbert and take pictures of places.
  2. Community, because it was the last assignment and that's when I finally got the printing down.
  3. Free time and the walking around campus because it was nice not doing a boring class and amore fun one.
1. My favorite project last semester was the community project because I could walk around and take pictures of my neighborhood. I was also able to see many beautiful houses and nice people around there. It was a very relaxing project that many people enjoyed doing.

2. The image that I am most proud of is the house that is near the lake. The reason why I like it is because it looks very beautiful. The viewers can actually smell the fresh air and the relaxing atmosphere present in the image.
  3. The best part of the class for me is the darkroom because I was able to print my photos. The process to print a photo is actually my favorite part. I could see how they would turn out, and I had learned many skills to print my photos.
1. The projects we did in PhotoShop. I love working on the computers better than other things in the class.
  2. I like the transparency one with the background. One of the reasons is because my family likes it and it turned out great.
  3. Working on PhotoShop. I like using computers and distorting images.
1. My favorite project was the teenager project because it showed personality and environment.
  2. The photo of my friend Heather when she was making a cute face.
  3. I enjoyed taking pictures because it was fun creating a (sometimes) unique image.
1. The pinhole project. It was interesting on how it worked.
  2. My pinhole picture. It was a good angle with a good image.
  3. Printing. It was fun figuring out the lighting and the focus.
1. My favorite project last semester was the family project, because I was able to spend time with my family and photograph the people who mean the most to me. It was also convenient and fairly easy.
  2. I am most proud of my family photo of my parents holding hands, and the photo of my best friend's house. I am most proud of these photos because I feel they turned out very creative, clear, and had good lighting and focus.
  3. Last semester, the best part of the class was just learning how to use a camera and develop film, and it was fun to improve upon it.
1. My favorite project last year was the Motion project. Because I thought it was cool to see how the photo turned out in their stopped action.
  2. Out of all the images I took last year my most favorite is the one I took a close up on my brother's shoe in the rocks.
  3. The best part of the class for me was developing the photos.
1. My favorite project last semester was of school. Over fall break I had the opportunity to go to Tijuana, Mexico. While I was there I took pictures of the kids while walking home.

2. The image I am most proud of is the photo of the headlights of cars streaking. I used a slow shutter speed to capture the light. It was sunset so get the right amount of light.

3. The best part of the class was being able to work for free. I enjoyed working at a good pace on developing photos.

1. My favorite project was the community project, because I had a lot of fun going to freestone with my friend at 5 a.m. The sunrise was pretty. Also because I got the best grade on that one.

2. I am most proud of the picture of will walking down the path in the dark. I just like the lighting and the feel of it I suppose, also my sister and friends have given me compliments on it.

3. The best part of class was taking pictures (though I didn't get very good grades on them) because I had a lot of fun taking the,. Even if they weren't the best pictures, it was an experience.

1. My favorite project last year was the school one. Where we show what school means to us. It was really fun and I got too take all the pictures I needed.

2. The one where my two friends are shaking hands. It was really clear and a good photo.

3. Taking pictures. It wasn't really hard or boring it was actually fun.

1. The one where we brought in an old photo, erased the background and put it on a new background because we were able to be creative and do our own thing that we wanted.

2. The one that we made our own background because I was creative with it and got to add details to the photo.

3. Learning how to develop because I have always had an interest in it.

1. My favorite project last semester was the filter project even though I didn't do well on it I liked taking photo's of bmx riding.

2. Of all the images last semester my most proud image was the one of the park. The contrast of the picture was amazing and you liked it.

3. My favorite part of class last semester was printing pictures.

1. The first project where we put a secret on the picture. Something no one knew about, I liked it because it was our own thing to do what we wanted.

2. The one of school, because the lighting and contrast was really great.

3. I loved the chilling after the project because everything was done and you felt really accomplished.

1. My favorite project last semester was the family project. I enjoyed capturing photos of my family because I am capturing pictures of my own blood, and I can see myself in my pictures through the faces of my family.
2. I am most proud of the image where I am hanging on the football goal post with the Tiger in the background on the wall. I like it because it shows myself postin up and shows the school I represent.
3. I enjoyed developing the picture perfect photos that I knew were better than the other kids in the class. Also, capturing aspects of life like nature and family was real fun.

1. The stereotype project because I liked taking pictures of my friends and just the whole project was interesting and fun.
2. My most proud was either the one of grandpa, in the right corner with him all focused and the background blurry or the one of my friend Randy where he's kinda middle left corner and he's in focus and the background is blurred. I think they are just the best in my eyes.
3. The best part of class was seeing other peoples work and showing mine.

1. My favorite project last semester was the family project. I liked it because I was taking pictures of people that mean something to me, and I could use the photos as gifts or just to put in an album. This project was unique to every student.
2. I am the most proud of a picture I took for the final project. The image was of a swing. I love the picture because it uses a photo technique (rule of thirds) instead of just randomly being there. Also, the quality of the image is fantastic. There are no dust spots or stains, and the lighting is great. Finally, swinging is one of my favorite pastimes, so the image has personal meaning behind it.
3. The best part of the class was actually seeing my images improve. It is satisfying to know that you are getting better at something after a lot of work.

1. My favorite project was the family project because I loved messing around with my family and ended up taking pictures of my friends because they are like my family.
2. There was one I took of my friend Jayson in art class, he was looking down at his paper and working and I really liked the way the picture turned out.
3. Getting to go in the dark room and print out my pictures, I enjoyed messing around with the filters to get the right contrast

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE STUDENT PROJECT EVALUATION SHEET

## Images of My Community Evaluation

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Per \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where in the community did you base your project on?
2. How did you show this place in your images?
3. Explain how you used the techniques of focus, motion, and/or composition to create interesting images.
4. What do you hope viewers will understand when they look at your images?
5. Other than becoming a better photographer, what did you learn from creating your images?

Area	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Average (2)	Needs Work (1)
Subject Matter	Subject matter is engaging and thought provoking, unique approach to the theme	Subject matter is interesting, there is some thought behind the portrayal	Subject matter is average or typical to this theme	Subject matter is cliché or does not meet the assignment's theme
Compositional Technique	Photographer used compositional techniques to bring a unique perspective and high level of interest to the image	Photographer used compositional techniques to bring some level of interest to the image	Photographer used compositional techniques in the image, but visual interest is not very strong	Photographer used basic compositional techniques to create the image, image may be center weighted or unbalanced
Photographic Technique	Photographic technique is strong, demonstrates a high level of skill acquisition	Photographic technique is growing, demonstrates a good level of skill acquisition	Photographic technique is average, may need assistance to complete image	Photographer demonstrates a basic level of skill acquisition, needs assistance often to complete image
Effort behind Creation	Photographer demonstrates a high level of research and reflection in the creation of the image	Photographer demonstrates a good level of research and reflection in the creation of the image	Photographer demonstrates an average level of research and reflection in the creation of the image	Photographer does not demonstrate research or reflection in the creation of this image

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_/16

APPENDIX G

SUMMARY OF CURRICULUM DESIGN CHECK #1 GIVEN TO  
STUDENTS

Summary of Curriculum Design Check #1

	Dislike	Dislike Somewhat	Neutral	Like Somewhat	Like A Lot
The first two photo projects were fun/interesting to complete	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	8 (8%)	52 (53%)	35 (36%)
I think the photo projects are interesting to high school students	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	24 (24%)	42 (43%)	31 (32%)
I feel comfortable using a film camera (understand the controls).	1 (1%)	7 (7%)	17 (18%)	34 (36%)	36 (38%)
I feel comfortable developing film.	1 (1%)	11 (11%)	21 (21%)	30 (30%)	36 (36%)
I feel comfortable printing photos in the darkroom.	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	15 (16%)	27 (28%)	52 (54%)
I think the journal entries are helping my learning.	27 (27%)	21 (21%)	34 (34%)	13 (13%)	4 (4%)

Random Sample of Comments:

*In this class, I really like....*

1. working on taking pictures
2. Taking Picture
3. Taking pictures, and chilling. Plus the teacher is amazing
4. The projects that we have to do, I think are creative.
5. The freedom of working, not being so controlled with what to do.
6. Working independently
7. Taking pictures, all our hands on learning
8. How hands on everything is. I love the dark room.
9. Walking around the school taking pictures
10. Getting to take the camera's home
11. Pinhole Cameras
12. The atmosphere
13. Taking and Developing photos.
14. I like what we have to take photos of because they are fun and enjoyable.
15. I enjoy the different projects and going out and taking pictures.
16. The photo taking, it was fun.

17. Printing photos in the darkroom.
18. Like the way we incorporate our lives and education with creativity.  
You learn as well as have fun.
19. Being able to express myself and to be creative.
20. The positive attitude and also developing my photos.
21. How I can express my creativity.
22. That you give us an assignment then we work to our own pace.
23. I really like the amount of time Mrs. Overby gives to accomplish our project I also like that she is understanding when we mess up.
24. I can truly express my creativity in ways I can't in another class.
25. In this class I really like to take pictures and I really like the atmosphere in here.
26. The way we are learning how to use a camera and develop film.
27. The environment. It's not too strict and leaves room for mistakes from which to learn.
28. Printing and taking photos of my choice.
29. I'm learning how to use a camera.
30. The atmosphere and how every one is willing to help.

*In this class, I don't enjoy...*

1. Loading film to develop.
2. Journals
3. Journals
4. Printing, because I messed up once, and the light meter because I messed up on that too
5. The journals
6. Journal Entries
7. Journal entries
8. Journal entries and working on the macs.
9. Printing papers in a different classroom.
10. I do not like journals. At all
11. Trying to set the camera
12. When my photos don't come out
13. People being so distracting in this class.
14. I don't enjoy the journals because they are hard and sometimes confusing.
15. Doing the journal entries and I'm bad at developing
16. I don't like the developing, like making the film because it's frustrating.
17. Doing journal entries on what we think of pictures.
18. I'm not good at working the devices on cameras and loading my film.
19. There aren't really too many people I care to talk to in this class.
20. I kinda don't enjoy the journal entries.
21. The deadlines.
22. ?? This class is 100% Perfect.
23. I don't like journal entries because I don't see a point for them.

24. The Journal entries.
25. Nothing☺
26. The fact it's only an hour long.
27. I just don't find photo very interesting not a passion of mine.
28. Doing journal entries.
29. There aren't any things I don't like about photo class.
30. How much down time there is.

APPENDIX H

SUMMARY OF CURRICULUM DESIGN CHECK #2 GIVEN TO  
STUDENTS

Summary of Curriculum Design Check #2

	Dislike	Dislike Some what	Neutral	Like Some what	Like A Lot	TOTAL RESPONSES
The School and Family projects are fun to complete	4 (5%)	5 (6%)	17 (22%)	35 (45%)	16 (21%)	77
I think the photo projects are interesting to high school students	1 (1%)	5 (6%)	22 (28%)	27 (35%)	23 (29%)	78
I feel comfortable using a film camera (understand the controls).	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	15 (20%)	30 (39%)	31 (41%)	76
I feel comfortable developing film.	1 (1%)	6 (8%)	11 (14%)	29 (38%)	30 (39%)	77
I feel comfortable printing photos in the darkroom.	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	17 (22%)	28 (37%)	29 (38%)	76
I think the journal entries are helping my learning.	22 (29%)	17 (22%)	25 (32%)	10 (13%)	3 (4%)	77

Random Sample of Comments:

*In this class, I really like....*

1. It when we get to actually use the cameras and take pictures.
2. The photo projects that have to do with teenage life and school not so much the family because mine is never together.
3. How the projects relate to the students.
4. Being able to capture the feeling of the moment. That feeling when looking through the camera, like it looks different.

5. Learning about cameras and exploring my creativity.
6. Printing photos in the darkroom
7. My "A"
8. I like being able to go at a good pace in class and complete our work with plenty of time.
9. How fun taking pics.
10. The hands on activities.
11. Taking black and white photos.
12. How we learn new things.
13. Taking pictures.
14. Pinhole cameras.
15. Going out and taking pictures.
16. Taking pictures with the camera.
17. The picture taking is very fun.
18. When my films turn out, Printing in the dark room.
19. Honestly everything.
20. Pinhole cameras.
21. The creativity of all the photos and the taking pictures.
22. Free time and being able to socialize while working.
23. The vibe in this classroom. I also enjoy the teacher and taking photos
24. Taking different angles on shots. Looking for different focuses.
25. I really like the people and the projects.
26. Working with partners and taking cameras home.
27. Everything.
28. Going out and taking pictures of cool things.
29. To take pictures for our projects.
30. Printing photos.

*In this class, I don't enjoy...*

1. Writing in our journals.
2. I don't enjoy how loud it gets and how we all basically fight over cameras and sometimes the film doesn't come out right.
3. All the free time we have to sit around.
4. Family projects
5. Katie trying to steal my cookies and tiny always asking me to scratch his back.
6. That it takes 25 minutes to develop film.
7. Harsh Grades.
8. ☺
9. Journals.
10. I don't enjoy journals. They have gotten better though.
11. Developing film.
12. Being behind.
13. Journals and wade.
14. Being behind.

15. Journaling.
16. Journal entries.
17. I printing I still haven't perfected it.
18. There's nothing that I really dislike.
19. Also honestly nothing.
20. Being Behind.
21. I don't enjoy loading the film
22. Not being able to go out and take pictures like we used to do.
23. The journals I don't enjoy that much.
24. Journal work.
25. I don't like the journals.
26. Journals.
27. Journals
28. Developing film takes a long time.
29. Journals and the text for our projects.
30. Journal entries.

APPENDIX I

DIAGRAM AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF CLASSROOM

