

VIDEO ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN CREATION OF  
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES WITH ADOLESCENT GIRLS  
AGING OUT OF AN ORPHANAGE (HOGARES DE NINAS) IN PERU

by

Tara Ashmore Callen

Dissertation Committee:

Professor Judith Burton, Sponsor  
Professor Dominic Mentor

Approved by the Committee on  
the Degree of Doctor of Education

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## ABSTRACT

### VIDEO ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN CREATION OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES WITH ADOLESCENT GIRLS AGING OUT OF AN ORPHANAGE (HOGARES DE NINAS) IN PERU

Tara Ashmore Callen

This dissertation was designed using a qualitative research mode of inquiry that utilized a mixed methodology approach. This dissertation was an ethnographic narrative study tracking eight young women who were “aging out” or forced to leave their orphanage in Peru, where most of them had spent a majority of their lives. The study examined the way in which a collaborative art community could support the participants as they narrated their lives over a 16-month period of time through photo-journaling and social media outlets.

This study relied upon interviews, on-site observations, personal journaling, and photographing, in addition to an overall thematic analysis of the output of each of the eight participants and two nuns. From these data, six key themes emerged concerning the outcomes of each young girl’s continuing life at the Hogar and their endeavors outside of the orphanage. The focal points of this study were community building via art making and building of personal aesthetic, community engagement, reflection on self-identity, cross-cultural art education, and shared experience via photo-art narratives and social media.

This research also examined the role of collaborative art experiences in helping these young women structure new identities and form collaborations with their peers designed to sustain them into their future lives. This dissertation studied not only the

formation of singular identities but how these functioned within a collaborative identity that supported the young participants as they moved out of their orphanage and forward into the outside world.

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T. A. C.

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets forth the problem statement and research goals of the overall study. I describe the setting of the orphanage in Lima, Peru, where my project work took place and impart context for the aims of this dissertation. In addition, background is provided regarding the participants of the study and rationale behind the choices made regarding the locale, the participants, and the art medium that was employed for the aims of the project and a brief overview of the methodology used to collect data for this investigation.

The dissertation addresses the identity issues of eight young women aging out of a secluded society in an orphanage in Peru. The dissertation tracks the identity formation of these young women over a period of sixteen months as they move into adult society. Some of the young women take up places at the university that is located approximately 60 miles away from the Hogar while others return to their homes and one disappeared completely. This dissertation also examines the role of collaborative art experiences in helping these young women structure new identities and form collaborations with their peers designed to sustain them into their future lives. This dissertation tracks not only the formation of singular identities but how these function within a collaborative identity that supports the young participants as they move forward in the world.

This chapter includes the educational aims of the project and the prelude to the data collections. The foundational elements are laid forth, and the background of my personal



work as the director of the nonprofit “Aurelius for the Arts” is detailed to provide the particulars regarding the origin of the dissertation intent and my personal suitability as principal researcher.

### **Art Education Initiative and Institutionalized Care Homes**

The subject of orphaned life and institutionalized care is one that dates back through centuries, and the models of caregiving for orphaned children have changed according to the times and resources of each country. Children have been abandoned or left in tragic circumstances with few options of viable caregivers due to the inevitable violence of the world we live in—past, present, and future. Wars, disease, and poverty leave our youngest and most vulnerable population in the greatest need, and yet, all around the world, it seems there are very few solutions to this problem. Every day in the news, we see the brutality of the refugee crisis and children living in war zones, left parentless and with little hope. They are forced to leave their homes and countries of origin to live in shantytowns, tents, and camps with scarce resources. The cycle continues worldwide, and there seem to be few substantial holistic caregiver models that exist, even in countries with the most substantial of resources that are able to cater to the complex issues of orphan care.

The luxury of clean water, food, and shelter, which should be the natural right of every living citizen, is routinely denied to numerous children universally because of their circumstances in life, where they were born, and how sorely society has failed them. The concept of an orphanage is one that is usually not regarded in such high esteem by the majority of society, because institutionalized care has developed a tarnished reputation over time. From my fieldwork observations and research on the delicate topic, I have concluded that the most grievous atrocities usually happen within state-run orphanages, as opposed to non-secular organizations. This is due to a variety of complex issues that

this dissertation touches on only mildly, as I have chosen to work with one specific orphanage and community, and thus their model of caregiving is one that is not necessarily ubiquitous and is in fact unique.

The eight participants and two teachers of this 16-month study are located just outside of Lima, Peru in a township called Puente Piedra. As a researcher in this field of study, I hoped to facilitate storytelling about the participants' lives within the orphanage as they transitioned to their lives in the outside world through photo-making and social media. The narratives detail the choices the participants asserted once they left the orphanage and made their way into the outside world after residing in a community based on strong moral conduct and progressive educative initiatives for most of their young lives.

Each girl created a unique photo-journal that she then shared on the agreed-upon social media platform called Instagram. Through this short video and photo-sharing site, we were able to communicate relatively efficiently, and I was able to track the ups and downs of their lives as some girls left the orphanage entirely, some attempted and failed to leave, and others moved on campus to study at a well-known university that worked directly with the Hogar in supplying scholarships to students with high academic standing. The participation of the nuns was particularly paramount in that they supported the project goals and contributed their own photographic narratives and interviews, which expanded the data collected regarding this community.

### **Problem Statement**

How can adolescent girls who have lived a large portion (if not their entire) lives within an orphanage utilize an artistic outlet (such as photo journaling) as an aid to document their journeys of leaving home, school, and the place of their childhood to enter the unknown, outside world? What can their journals tell us about a topic so seldom

addressed? The children and adolescents who make up the populace of most orphanages have few resources, and often they cannot rely upon family to house and provide for them as they reach adolescent maturity at the age of 18. These young women are subsequently aged out of their homes and places of education to make room for incoming children. The term “aging out” means that when young people are finished with schooling and residency at the orphanage, usually at the age of 18 to 20 (unless they have special needs), they must leave because they are too old to qualify for care under the orphanage system.

Could introducing a way for the girls to chronicle this particular year of their life, one that is so monumental to them, help society better understand their struggles and lives as they launch into the real world? When first preparing for this longitudinal study, preliminary research on topics of social media and comparing different platforms that would be best suited for photography and video editing work led me to social media sharing platforms such as Instagram, Flickr, Starmatic, Tumblr, and Stipple, just to name a few, where people share their art work, writings, musings, and ideas. In the utilization some of these sites, I commenced a project with the objective of supporting the girls in their art making while keeping them connected to one another and to myself as the teacher and researcher throughout the course of the study.

This notion of creating a story with a small group of girls via one continuous thread that we all contributed to evolved as a shared experience that served as an opportunity for the girls to learn how to access technology and utilize digital narratives in creative and interesting ways. Picture taking, iPhone art, editing, scrapbooking, and video-making are all methods in which the girls were trained in order to begin the 16 months of recording and collecting images and story lines that encompassed who they were and where their lives would ultimately lead them. My own art practice also evolved, and I developed a mode of continuous communication between the girls and myself by contributing to several mutual social media platforms dedicated to art sharing in the form of

photography, journaling, and individually profiling each subject. Through using unified, community-driven platforms, the dialogue certainly benefited from greater mobility, impetus, and flow.

There is a universal and intensely dynamic period for the majority of teenagers when they come of age and must transition out of their high schools and homes into larger society. Yet domestically, the transitions into young adulthood are eased somewhat with options available for college, vocational schooling, military service, internships, and familial support. A study orchestrated by Ann Masten, Jelena Obradovic, and Keith Burt (2006) on “emerging adulthood and resilience factors” describes the period of transition for young adults as “one that denotes a period of concentrated change in individuals, their contexts, and their interactions that may increase vulnerabilities and threats for the individual as well as opportunities for positive transformation” (p. 173). It is clear that this specific shift into one’s adult life is a precious and critical phase where the right amount of support, resources, education, and mentorships is so invariably needed in order for adolescents to enter into a well-adjusted and stable adulthood.

The participants specific to this study were eight young girls, some who still reside at Hogares de Niñas, and some who have already left. This is an all-girls’ orphanage, run solely by Catholic nuns, and is located in Puente Piedra, Peru, an outer lying territory of Lima. The very first conversations I had with the nuns and girls revealed quite a bit of uncertainty on everyone’s part concerning the girls’ future paths in life. The resources of the orphanage are quite scarce and not fully secure. In other words, they have few private funders and they cannot count on one sustaining source, patron, or even government aid. Additionally, the two universities that are really the only two realistic options for these particular girls have strict guidelines concerning whom they will accept. Their system is based only on grades and academic scholarship. If some of the girls were not entirely proficient in their studies, then most likely the opportunity to pursue a college education was not financially feasible or realistic. This left many lingering questions for all

involved in terms of finding viable alternatives for some of these young women and the outcomes of their 16 months in transition.

### **Research Questions**

- (1) Given that adolescents who have been living in orphanages most of their lives face uncertainties that are compounded by the fact that they must in due course launch out into the world when they come of age, society knows very little about what constitutes this experience for them. We also know very little about the resources that are available to these young people and how they function after leaving their place of residence.
- (2) Given the opportunity to document the experiences of 8 adolescents transitioning out of an orphanage in Lima, Peru, what can be learned about their individual experiences over a period of 16 months through their writing, photographing, and video-making? Given the support to create a collaborative “art network,” what might we also learn from these young women that would help further understand how teachers and adults can provide the kind of mentoring they need during such a transitional period and the role of art practice in facilitating this experience?

### **Sub-questions**

- (1) In what respect can a narrative photography and video experience make a unique contribution to the ways in which 8 young women self-reflect at a pivotal time in their lives? In what way can art function as a valuable aesthetic resource in the mentoring of these young women?
- (2) Can these 8 young women learn about themselves through the self-reflective process of journaling the events of their everyday life and composing a story

line in which their (aesthetic) vision captures their transition from the orphanage to adult society?

- (3) Why might this type of art experience become important to these 8 young women at this particular time in their lives and in what way can it function as a “supportive network” for them in their time of transition?

### **Assumptions not to be Debated**

- Given that most children who have resided within institutionalized care homes are already faced with many difficulties, then the challenges they come up against when they leave from their respective orphanage are that much more demanding.
- Given the paucity of resources for most underserved schools and orphanages, the children residing at “Hogares de Niñas” have most likely had very minimal art experience or exposure to technology, the Internet, media, and social media.
- Given that the girls residing at “Hogares de Niñas” have lived at the school/orphanage for a probable extended period of time, the first year or two that they must leave their home and school could be strongly considered a transitional time for these girls.
- Given that the students at “Hogares de Niñas” all live in a community-driven home and religious environment, the children then naturally take care of each other and support each other, thereby living within a family-oriented model of childcare.

### **Assumptions to be Debated**

- Given that the 8 girls in this study will be subject to a particularly demanding and intimidating year ahead of them, creating an art sharing and collaborative network is supportive of these girls during this time of their lives. In the thorough documentation of 16 months in their lives via photo journaling, these young people will be able to self-reflect and turn their lens inward, so to speak, as they create a vision of their unique perspective that is ongoing and free-flowing.
- Given that some of the girls will be leaving their safe community and journey into adult society, this study can create an opportunity for mentoring and support that provides a sense of continuity as they leave their school. The young women will find the ability to stay in touch with their peers and to create a network of sharing that is stimulating and reassuring at the same time.
- Given an impoverished, male-dominated society coupled with the fact that adolescence is particularly hard on young girls without families, the few years of their lives outside of the orphanage may be trying and daunting for them.
- Given that very little has been written in regard to the phenomenon of “aging out of orphanages” and its impact upon young people when they must leave their home and school, this study will give a certain perspective that is authentic and authored by those who are most impacted by this fact. The girls will have a chance to share their viewpoints and stories via their art, and this will add to a growing knowledge base of how to create better mentoring and support services for adolescents who must navigate adult society once they come of age and are turned out into the world.
- Given that adolescents 18 to 20 years of age will be departing from their place of residence and community of one another, if this study is successful in

supplying mentoring and support throughout their 16-month journey (and beyond), then it is likely that they will feel less isolated and alone in their ventures once they leave their community.

- Given that the nature of this study is community empowerment and connectivity through art making and sharing, this study is designed to assist these young women and their endeavors in the outside world. This research is founded upon the principles of outreach through art and the creation of provisions for young people needing further guidance and mentorship from one another and from suitable role models.
- Given the gap in literature and research related to the subject at hand, these particular young people, this age group (adolescence) in this setting of an orphanage in rural Peru provides the ideal subjects to gather data on my research questions of art, community, connectivity, visual media, and autobiographical storytelling via photo-art making.

### **Setting**

The orphanage where this study took place is called Hogar de Niñas, and it is located in Puente Piedra, Peru. The orphanage was started in 1961 as a non-religious institution. In 1963, the religious congregation came in and took over its operation after the original founders left, thus leaving it to the Catholic Church to run. There are approximately 120 girls aged 4 to 18, and from this number, 13 girls in total were transitioning out of the school when the study commenced. It seems that each girl had a variable timeline on this, but the consensus was that most had to be out by December 2014.

Puente Piedra is located about 30 miles north of Lima, and it is a struggling community with many of its citizens largely dependent upon the orphanage for donations,



daily meals, activities, and family care for their young children. Hogar de Niñas is also host to 1,000 schoolchildren who attend school there from the age of 4 to 18. The classrooms are very crowded, with 40 to 50 children in each class at a time, as there are no regulations on classroom size in this part of Peru.

### **Population**

As stated previously, Hogares de Niñas is located in Puente Piedra, Peru and consists of 120 girls aged 4 to 18. One special needs girl was born without arms, and because of her disability and her love of art, the government pays for an art teacher solely for her. There are no other children with significant special needs or disabilities. The order that the nuns belong to is that of *The Hijas de la Misericordia de la TOR de San Francisco, Diocesis de Carabayllo* (Franciscan daughters of Misericordia, third regular order of St. Francis). The ethnicity of the girls is mainly that of indigenous or Indian descent, and they predominantly hail from surrounding, impoverished areas in both rural Peru and the province of Lima.

### **Background**

I have had a long-standing interest in adoption, art education, and orphanage studies since I was very young. I personally have always loved making art and started really becoming serious about the visual arts at around age 12. My adolescent bedroom was solely comprised of a bed and a large drafting table, at which I literally spent hours every day after school and sports indulging in my arts practice. It never occurred to me at that point that so many other children would not have the same access to an arts education. It was later in my academic career after extensive traveling and working through college in various youth service programs that catered to at-risk youth in New

York that I began to make the connections that eventually led me to working with orphanages and schools in Latin America.

For a variety of reasons, I felt a kinship with the displaced, abandoned, and neglected. I come from a large family of disjointed familial relations; I have 15 brothers and sisters ranging in ages from early 30s (myself, and my twin brother, who are the youngest) to late 60s. The series of fragmented relations between so many disjointed and broken off families produced a sense of instability, uncertainty, and constant insecurity in my childhood. My relationship with my mother, who was our one true and dependable caregiver, seemed the only strand of consistency in my life, even as the volatilities of my many other half-siblings had such a deeply debilitating effect on her as well.

In 2007, when I had just turned 27 years old and right before I left to commence my master's thesis and five-week project in Panama, my mother discovered a lump in her chest. About midway through my venture, I received a phone call that my mother, 20 years my father's junior, was diagnosed with advanced staged terminal lung cancer. The one parent in my life, the supreme constant for us all, was not going to live much longer. If there was fuel from my earlier personal history to begin these projects, then it became all the more intense with my mother's drastic decline in health.

I was absolutely anguish-ridden, yet this further impelled me to finish my masters and continue on with my work because it became my comfort, my security, and my cathartic reprieve from the impending doom of my mother's death. In the midst of shuttling back and forth from place to place and rotating caretaking duties with two of my sisters, I found tranquility in the writing, the teaching, and the process of forming a vehicle for my efforts in bringing the arts to others. I gradually drew greater spiritual growth and harmony from working so closely with the Catholic nuns who ran the schools and orphanages I visited in Panama, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Peru. My personal faith deepened with each new project I undertook.

Unfortunately, my father never fully recovered from the circumstances of my mother's passing and my core family remained permanently broken, thus sealing forever in me an intense passion for working with heartbroken kids. My education and its place in my life, the projects that would lead me from place to place, became a sort of family for me. The world of academia and the mentors I have been so fortunate to have in my life have served me in such a way that it has been indelibly instilled in my being to want to give back what has been given to me.

Therefore, as a master's student at NYU, I wanted to do something with my studies that would culminate in an ongoing project that could be sustainable and far-reaching. The crux of my thesis would be its community-driven longevity and the principal aspect of bringing teaching artists into foreign communities to transmit their knowledge and skill within an artist-focused program. My mentor at NYU, Laurin Raiken, was the driving force behind my first project. He knew that I had been visiting the country of Panama quite frequently for business reasons and I had subsequently begun to regale him with my stories of Malambo. It became increasingly clear that my project would be centered in this locale and that together we could conceive of a sustainable and ongoing arts thesis.

Sister Lourdes runs Malambo, the largest orphanage in Central America, home to nearly 180 children. An orphanage seemed an ideal place to set a plan in motion: a place where possessions were all shared and there was a communal experience, a mini-community unto its own. Thus Malambo, located 30 minutes outside Panama City, Panama, on a rural farm setting was exactly this—a microcosm of the displaced, where genuine humanistic values were practiced in the everyday lives of the children who resided there.

I began to conceive of a rough plan where I could involve all of the kids that lived there, and I wanted them to feel like they were part of the actual creation process as I developed a visual arts program tailored to their specific needs. The needs of children

varied from orphanage to orphanage. Some places simply had better infrastructure and services than others. In Panama, for instance, they had a large populace of children and they housed the children according to age group, with one nun living within each home. They had one house strictly for newborns and infants and a larger home located just off the main premises of the orphanage that housed children of all ages who were either HIV-positive or had full-blown AIDS. Malambo was a rarity in that they kept babies on site, they had a mix of boys and girls (very few boys, but from my experience, it is usually girls that make up a large portion of the orphaned populace in Latin America), and they also mixed the kids who were considered “sick” or with special needs with the other children in classroom settings.

As far as institutionalized care homes for children go, I noticed it was extremely well kept, there was good energy there, and the nuns, especially Sister Lourdes, were open to our intentions and welcoming. The children did not seem to be without hope; in fact, they seemed to be peaceful and fulfilled. The nuns were caring and nurturing over their brood, and the camaraderie between the children was truly remarkable.

Malambo left a huge impression on me, in that it seemed to be the supreme example of how such a large orphanage could be run. The children’s days primarily consisted of regular and routine Mass, prayers, school, and chores. The older children took turns with their daily shifts helping to care for the newborns and the toddlers. There was a strong sense of togetherness among the children. They did their part in making sure that their home was efficacious. In addition to Malambo being the largest orphanage system in Latin America, it also caters to the larger, impoverished community of Arraijan, providing food, clothing, health and social services, psychiatric/psychological care, and education to all citizens in this small village.

This initial project eventually led me to create a 501(c)(3) organization, which I named “Aurelius for the Arts.” We implemented two more similar art programs in the Dominican Republic and filmed each project in its entirety. These art programs consisted

of bringing in foreign teaching artists to run individual art educational lesson plans on a rotating basis. All three schools came with their own sets of issues, and we had to be amenable as teaching artists when designing a curriculum that would work according to the differing situations of the children. Though the aim of “Aurelius for the Arts” was to implement art programs in underserved schools and orphanages in Latin America, it became clear that some more scholarly work needed to be done identifying the actual problems confronting young people in orphanages and the role of art experiences in empowering their visual voices.

The last project, in the summer of 2013, was constructed in Medellin, Colombia, where I utilized a pinhole camera lesson plan to teach the girls there about how to make cameras out of organic materials, thereby helping them produce an autobiographical image with their contraptions. I hoped for them to learn about the fundamental and basic elements of photography by constructing their own cameras and showing them how art making can be a fun process and learning venture that empowered their individual perceptions. We eventually constructed two more arts programs in two smaller orphanages in Medellin and hired one teacher to go from school to school in the afternoons to keep the art classes going.

Thus, prior to working in Peru, my experience working in various project sites in and around Medellin, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Panama all contributed to my decision to remain working with this specified region and populace. Seven years after my first project began at Malambo in Panama, I felt my work had progressed and long-term issues such as sustainability and stronger cohesion in lesson plans resulted in much more enduring work.

### **Personal Suitability**

An art education program has been proven time and time again to enhance the learning experience of most children, while giving them room to creatively express their ideas and opinions in a way that other subjects may not offer (Burton, 1995; Hurwitz & Day, 2007). A well-rounded art program can provide children with the ability to individualize their responses to certain topics and cultural perspectives that may have been lacking, especially for children living within an institutionalized care environment or away from their natural born parents, as is the case of the children that are cited in this specific study.

I have been working cross-culturally in orphanages and schools for nearly seven years now and am continually learning how to improve and enhance my arts programs each time I enter a new place. Due to the nature of my ongoing studies of teaching art in other countries and my experience in the field, I am certain that I am strongly suited to this work in Latin America and my projects with underserved children. Furthermore, I have strong ties with the art community and am privy to a large network of teaching artists and practicing artists that continue to be willing to volunteer their time teaching art. My volunteers have contributed their vision and knowledge to an overall experience that has been successful on many fronts and has made substantive advances in its curriculum design and overall planning. It is the hope that as we continue our work in cross-cultural art education, we can gather more evidence on how to create well-rounded and exceptional art programs for underserved schools and orphanages.

In addition to traveling extensively in the countries where I have implemented these art programs, I have also created and executed plans to successfully raise money for each venture. The ongoing search for corporate sponsors is something that creates sustainability in the programs, and the ever-evolving plans for longevity are an integral component in keeping the art classes up and running for the children even after we

depart. The teaching artists are the crux of this operation, one that is run solely by artists who volunteer their time to create lesson plans and teach at the differing project sites. The programs are constantly improving and evolving organically with each new student culture that we access.

### **Pilot Study**

In the summer of 2013, I commenced a pilot study in an orphanage named *Hogares Infantiles San Jose* located in Medellin, Colombia. My intention was to focus on the older children because they made up the majority of students living at the school. Furthermore, the older students had presumably spent more time in their school/orphanage than the younger children had, and therefore may have developed stronger and deeper connections to one another and to the place that served as their primary home. In the practicing of an informed and responsive approach, we aspired to relinquish our own cultural lens, so to speak, and expand upon the ongoing discourse of how to teach art in another culture while staying mindful of our students' heritage and environment.

The scope of work for this study involved 18 girls aged 12 to 20 who resided most of the time at *Hogares Infantiles San Jose*. In consideration of the age group and gender of these children, we thought that autobiographical story-telling stimulated by a handmade pinhole camera image would be an ideal educational activity in that it would cater to the interests and needs of young girls and aid the researchers in exploring the girls' personal and cultural proclivities. For the purposes of this past study, and with the use of the autobiographical story transmitted via a single image, I aspired to gain insight into certain aspects of the students' lives previously understudied. In addition, I anticipated that the girls would become inspired in some way, after learning about the mechanics of photography and then imagining their own storyline. I aimed to test out a lesson plan that could potentially be improved upon or reworked to fit the needs of the

teaching artist working transculturally and inform any future work I embarked upon in other locales.

The results of this study were somewhat mixed. Because my timeframe did not allow me to interview the girls, I could only glean from my data of day-to-day observations, the video footage and the finished products, whether the girls effectively responded to our lesson plans and initiatives. I learned quite a bit about my participants and how they spent their time at school and home through direct interactions and observation of their relationships with one another as they built their cameras and framed their final picture. I knew that a single image resulting from a very mercurial pinhole camera was not going to yield a great deal of information about their day-to-day lives. Instead, I chose to focus on all of the elements stemming from the project as one large construct in grasping a better understanding of my participants and the motives behind their work.

The major contribution that this study made to my ongoing academic work was the realization of the flaws in my execution and modes of collecting data. Because it was a pilot study, conducted over a week's period, I miscalculated how much the subjects' end products might not be the clearest representation of what they wished to demonstrate and share with us. I needed to directly interview and record their dialogue about this project to gain a more thorough and comprehensive picture of the lesson plan's overall impressions for them. It was hard to gauge how much of the art process they appreciated against the attention they received from us as foreign volunteers and the chance to try a new activity outside of their normal school routines.

The girls seemed to want to be very much involved with helping us teach the lesson plan, working through problems, and aiding one another when things got a bit complicated or were not entirely clear. The communal effort was substantiated in the products that this lesson plan yielded, but because each girl only was able to produce one image, it proved hard to identify emergent themes amongst their work and corroborate



any evidence that this lesson plan was significant in discovering a substantial narrative and autobiographical theme. For instance, because the girls only had one chance to take their photo and despite the work we initially embarked upon as a group, in which the participants actually went out and captured their image, it was unclear as to how satisfied the group was with their final pinhole pictures and what they felt they could have improved upon and further explored.

I justifiably felt that a single image could never do justice to their stories and that the next time around, I needed to utilize an artistic medium involving technology and form a network that would enable me to keep in touch with my students more efficiently. Additionally, I needed to inspire the girls to stick to a more thorough, supportive, and structured regimen of recording their stories. In employing various avenues for the girls in Peru to express themselves, through writing, painting, drawing, photographing, collaging, and video-making, versus relying on one very limited medium such as the pinhole camera, accordingly, I felt that the girls would have many more tools and sources when creating a narrative that would fully incorporate their points of view and vision.

### **The Selection of Puente Piedra**

This initial pilot study that took place in Medellin, Colombia in 2012 is what first spurred my interest in going deeper with a group of participants while creating a long-term plan that would benefit them in that there would be a much more structured framework that we would all build together and add to as time progressed. The idea of building a camera and learning how it worked on both a functional and artistic level was a compelling short-term lesson plan. But in Peru, I planned to conduct a longitudinal study, and I quickly realized that my participants would need to use real cameras and access internet service to share our artistic endeavors from afar. A volunteer at the Peruvian Hogar, whom I had known for many years and who was volunteering his time

there, was the first person to bring the orphanage to my attention and introduced me to Madre Alexandrina and Madre Ofelia. This locale, though very far away and not easy to get to, seemed the perfect place to implement a strategy of discovering the outcomes of young people aging out of their orphanage while also developing an art education support network that might help them through such a daunting transition.

### **Overview of Conditions**

It should be noted that the living conditions of the children residing in the various orphanages in which I have worked vary dramatically. The reasons most children are living within an orphanage tend to differ. The children's parents or caregivers have either abandoned them or they have passed away, children may have been forcibly removed from their homes due to neglect or abuse, or the parents/caregivers are not able to provide for their children and decide to voluntarily leave them in an orphanage, but are able to see their children on weekends. Girls make up the bulk of the orphanage population in the schools I have been connected to, and there is usually a high population of children with special needs or children with specified diseases such as AIDS, whose care is too expensive for their parents to undertake.

### **Limitations**

I conducted one study at one school on a select group of eight girls. The age group was between 18 and 20 years of age. I acted as teacher, program director, and interviewer, while also utilizing observational data to inform my study. I interviewed the students and the two head nuns throughout the course of the 16-month study, but my access to other teachers and community members was somewhat limited as my main

focus was upon my eight participants and the nuns and the time that I spent at the Hogar was primarily to be with them and observe them in their daily environments.

I have never taught art professionally, and I am a relative novice at video and photography editing. The lesson plan had to be flexible in nature to accommodate the various circumstances and cultural/linguistic differences of all who were involved in this project. I also kept an image journal and file folder to track the images and videos posted by each of my participants. The artistic medium for this practice was photo-making with refurbished Samsung Galaxy 3 tablets (models from year 2013) and some short 15-second videos. One of the girls and one nun used an iPhone Touch, which was donated to them by a volunteer, but it operated much in the same fashion as the Samsung Galaxies. A myriad of apps are available for editing and arranging photos, which were conveniently downloaded and then used to edit directly on the devices.

As the study progressed, I was able to communicate with the girls via Skype (also a free downloadable program for their devices) and through email correspondence, but not consistently because regular access to the Internet and computers was not realistic, and on many occasions, we had to have a project facilitator set up the calls and translate. Despite the issue of limited Internet access, I managed to incorporate a plan that would enable most of the participants to keep up a correspondence with myself as the principal researcher and their participating peers while they collected images throughout the 16-month study, which were eventually used to create artwork relating to their experiences.

As previously mentioned, an important point to keep in mind was my reliance upon an interpreter to translate the lesson plan instruction and to answer questions both from my side and the girls' side. As could be expected, sometimes the communication was somewhat less fluid, and therefore, I had to be prepared to answer questions and explain things in a concise and coherent manner. Another constraint to this study was the fact that

two participants left the orphanage inexplicably, and one girl fell massively ill and was not able to complete the full 16-month duration.

There were also the initial safety issue worries to consider, namely, that some participants might have their devices stolen or even sell them. One way I tried to prevent the selling of the devices was to inform the participants that they were the organization's property (Aurelius for the Arts) and that they were on loan for the length of the study. I thought this notion would lead the girls to see the devices as more sacred so they would become more vigilant over the care of their tablets. I had to rely on my subjects to keep up with a regular schedule of learning how to use their tablets proficiently, the photo and video sharing sites, and regular posting of the themes that I assigned them bimonthly. I also had to be diligent in setting up regular Skype conversations and visitations that would advance my knowledge regarding the girls' ongoing lives while also being available to them when they had questions, comments, or concerns.

### **Aims of Dissertation**

The aims of this dissertation were to offer opportunities for eight young women transitioning out of their orphanage to use art making (photography) as a way of reflecting on their new identities as they moved into uncertain futures. It is assumed that the arts provide some formative tools that not only help the individuals to develop their new identities, but in this study it is also designed to provide an important collaborative activity establishing dialogue and connection among the participants. A central feature of the dissertation was to teach new skills in creating photo-narratives to document personal experiences as a means of reflecting on a critical period of transition. This study also offers recommended actions for further research and educational opportunities in the field of cross-cultural art education and the role of social media as a means to bring connectivity in underserved communities.

This dissertation argues that art can be utilized as a tool of support, and that if given a chance, most young people wish to have their voices heard and their stories told. Over the 16-month period of time of this study, the intention was to create a sense of community based around art making using technology and social media to enable eight young women to tell their stories about their lives and hopes and dreams both singularly and together. In the fashioning of the stories it was anticipated that new identities would emerge and supportive collaborations formed.

### **Chapter Overview**

Chapter I has offered the introduction to the study and problem statement, how the dissertation arose out of my personal experiences, how these experiences heightened the problems relating to the orphans in general and to those of an age to transition out of care, and what significant literature addressed the problem of transitioning youngsters while learning from their vantage points.

Chapter II reviews the literature on topics related to the study, including materials drawn from art education and its value for underserved populations, cross-cultural art education, cross-cultural educative competencies, orphan care, Latina female health disparities, institutionalized home care for children, social media, community engagement, and the building of aesthetics. It argues that art can be utilized in a way that is supportive for young people transitioning out of their orphanage.

Chapter III elaborates upon the methodology and procedural items for the study. It also includes an overview and rationale for the data collection, analysis, and treatment of the data.

Chapter IV presents the case studies of the eight participants and includes two separate case studies on the head nuns, Mother Alexandrina and Mother Ofelia. It supplies images and analysis of the photos of the participants. Themes that arise from the

examination of young women's unique photo narratives include community empowerment and connectivity through collaborative photo-art making.

Chapter V offers an in-depth discussion of the data and reflects upon the impacts of art practice on the lives of the participants, the nuns, and myself as the researcher. This chapter offers a thematic study of my research questions concerning art, community, connectivity, visual media, and autobiographical story telling via photo-art making.

Chapter VI discusses the educational implications of the study, the significance of art education for underserved communities, the future of the Hogar, and its efforts in creating a sustainable art education initiative for the children and young people who reside there, while also expounding upon the connection of spirituality and positivistic outcomes in the lives of some of the participants transitioning out of the orphanage. This chapter also incorporates thoughts concerning the significance of artistic expression and identity building in adolescents during transitory times.

Chapter VII is the conclusion of the entire dissertation and includes future ideas of research at the Hogar. Subsequent emails and communications between Madre Alexandrina and myself have prompted thoughts about ongoing sustainable art endeavors at the Hogar, and pictures are located in the appendices of the study that show an existing structure on the orphanage's premises that has the potential to be turned into an indoor/outdoor art studio for children and young people residing at the Hogar. Finally this chapter discusses the implications, outcomes, and conclusive efforts of this dissertation.

The Bibliography is a comprehensive lists of books, journal articles, newspaper articles, and all other relevant art documents that were utilized in the research and writing of the dissertation.

The appendices include images taken of the Hogar, a picture of myself with the participants, a picture of the head Madre Alexandrina, pictures of the space that could be viable for running sustainable art education workshops, sample interview questions for the participants, and finally full-screen mockups for a proposed mobile app that could one

day be utilized in connecting students and potential volunteers to project sites similar to the Hogar.

### **Summary**

The study of what happens after young people are required to leave their place of residence, to make room for others and to pursue an adult life, whether it be higher education, vocational job training, a menial job, reconnecting with one's family members or just drifting along with no real plan in place, is a subject that is seldom addressed. The purpose of this study is for researchers, teachers, children advocates, and organizations to gain some insight into how to support a population that is greatly in need of attention and guidance. Art making is a medium where different pathways of communication can ultimately be opened. Our society is one that is becoming increasingly globalized and connected; barriers of language, class, education, and familial circumstances are being broken down, in part due to the onslaught of technology. This is both a good thing and a bad thing. If proper measures are taken, young people can greatly benefit from the connectively that technology and art making can provide. Although this project is unique in its nature and the project site extraordinary for its role in the young people's lives, I do believe that this Peruvian Hogar can represent an effective model of orphan aftercare while also supporting the notion that art can serve as a viable and meaningful outlet as an approach for story telling and identity building that informs research with far-reaching effects. The collaborative nature of this project where art making served as a tool for the participants to self-reflect on their journeys ahead and construct identities apart from the Hogar was the crux of the dissertation aims.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is an overview of the literature that frames the dissertation. It begins with a synopsis of art education and its role in school curricula while touching on related subjects, such as Latina female health disparities, cross-cultural art teaching pedagogy, cross-cultural competencies and sensitiveness, the orphaned circumstance, and the role of social media in adolescent lives, and includes a brief overview of identity formation during the onset of adolescence. The definition of *aesthetic* for purposes of this study evokes the beliefs forwarded by art education theorist Maxine Greene (1995) concerning the “use” of the “imagination in a search for openings without which our lives narrow and our pathways become cul-de-sacs” (p. 17). A personal aesthetic encompasses a working narrative that becomes a “call for imaginative capacity” that broadens over time and that art education helps to uncover. The work of art education theorists such as Maxine Greene, Judith Burton, Howard Gardner, Paulo Friere, and John Dewey is explored to provide scholarly contexts to the study. Lastly, it is argued that there is a lack of research regarding the topic examined here concerning what happens to orphaned young people who reach a certain age and must leave institutionalized care. Very little has been written about this subject; thus, the investigation into the lives of the eight participants and two nuns for purposes of this study offers insights to a society that has been insufficiently informed on such a significant arena of inquiry.



As this study took place in Puente Piedra, which is an impoverished community located just outside of Lima, Peru, a summation is also presented in this chapter about the country of Peru and the many problems faced by this nation both in the past and the present day. An analysis of orphaned life and further explorations of what “aging out” denotes for young people who are transitioning out of institutionalized care in Latin America are offered in this chapter in order to gain a more thorough understanding of the multi-layered issues that are addressed.

### **The Makings of a Good Society**

The notion of a good society, one that harbors equality for all and support for those most in need, is one that has been contemplated for centuries. Most would agree that children who have been abandoned and otherwise orphaned for a multitude of reasons would fall into the category of those most in need. Yet, there is a paucity of literature on the care and aftercare of such children. Researchers, educators, and those interested in child welfare have largely been the pioneers in this domain of study. A preliminary history of institutionalized care for children can be traced within nearly every society, but it is through my personal observations in the fieldwork of working within Latin American orphanages that I have witnessed that the majority of care homes for orphaned children have fallen under the purview of the Church, and I have come to see how understudied this topic remains.

The work I have undertaken has always been within Catholic-run institutions that serve impoverished communities. These are usually in rural areas, just outside a larger metropolis. From my experiences, not just at the Peruvian orphanage but at other project sites, donations from large local companies are rare and federal funding spotty or nonexistent. A struggling community that needs food, shelter, clothing, education, and

spiritual guidance and counseling can usually find it at orphanages like the Peruvian Hogar.

Essentially, the nuns here practice what John Kenneth Galbraith (1996) would describe as a “humane agenda,” one that implicates the individual and forwards a formula that applies to us all. He states, “In the good society all of its citizens must have personal liberty, basic well-being, racial and ethnic equality, the opportunity for a rewarding life” (p. 4). During my time at the Hogar, I witnessed this model as ideal one. Young girls with little to no prospects were given opportunities solely due to the fact that they were abandoned to an institution that emphasized the idea of education and strong moral values. This put them at an advantage on many different levels; the most significant is the actual after care and support they receive from the nuns and teachers themselves, as the nuns serve as mentors and intermediaries between larger surrounding educational institutions, such as universities and training colleges. This activism is what granted most of the participants in my study access to a system that would otherwise be closed off to them. The savvy of the nuns and their willingness to guide the girls toward success via education and/or vocational training also provided the girls with an ever-present safety net. The Hogar is a sanctuary from the world, but it is also a place that is truly unique.

### **The Role of Art Education for Purposes of This Study**

My dissertation is founded upon the work and principles of philosophers, writers, and thinkers on adolescence, cross-cultural art education, Jungian theory, and progressive art educative pedagogies. Theorists, writers, and researchers such as Judith Burton, Howard Gardner, Alfred Gell, Paulo Friere, and John Dewey, to name just a few, inform this study and provide a structure for the theories and conjectures this research expands upon.

Howard Gardner (1990), who outlines in his book, *Art Education and Human Development*, theories on the Westernized educational model and its dismissiveness of the arts as an integral component to academic studies, is a pioneer in artistic expansion studies in young children through early adulthood. Gardner primarily utilizes a “developmental” point of view while ardently supporting the integral role that the arts play in the “sensory and perceptual” capacities of children (p. 11). A solid arts practice is the foundation of young children’s first endeavors in exploratory play and sensory/intellectual discovery. Accordingly, the more children are buoyed in their arts practice (Burton, 2000, 2009, 2011; Gardner, 1990; Lowenfeld, 1961) or “exposed to strong and varied arts experiences over periods of time,” the more the children are “confident and willing to explore and take risks, exert ownership over and pride in their work, and show compassion and empathy towards peers, families, and communities” (Burton, 2000, p. 254; see also Darby & Catterall, 1994; Ludwig, 1994, as cited in Burton, 2000).

A further crucial element of Gardner’s (1990) research hinges upon the interactivity of the child with his/her culture when engaging in art making. He states that:

Human artistry is an activity of the mind, an activity that involves the use of and transformation of various kinds of symbols and systems of symbols. Individuals who wish to participate meaningfully in artistic perception must learn to decode, to read, the various symbolic vehicles in their culture; individuals who wish to participate in artistic creation must learn how to manipulate, how to write with the various symbolic forms present in their culture. (p. 9)

It is the child’s recognition of cultural influence and his/her increasingly sophisticated modes of integration as certain skills are broadened and an aesthetic construct is accessed to a point where a child is thinking more imaginatively, working more deeply, and creating new cognitive connections. These are all forms of knowledge as the child transitions across various stages of childhood that enhance of their learning. It is in these stages or transitions that the art teacher may begin to see how art learning changes as the child grows older with true, substantiated, organic advancement of artistic

proWess, which takes on added personal qualities and meanings for children and adolescents.

Another very salient point to Gardner's (1990) theory lies in his claims regarding the trajectory of artistic skill in children. He is concerned with the freshness of perspective that young children bring to the creative process versus an older child or adolescent who may have become preoccupied with the notion that art must possess more photorealistic slants (p. 18); thus, older children often become "discouraged altogether from drawing" (p. 19). The adolescent period of time is a crucial point in a young person's life, where creative outlets can be introduced to challenge the often rigid and formulaic notions they may have concerning art. This is important, especially if the adolescent is generally concerned with relating his/her "technical facility to a more personal vision," so that "when this kind of productive union occurs, the youth is likely to remain involved in the arts, at least as a producer" (p. 19). If adolescents are engaged in constructive creative outlets that ultimately allow them to develop keener perspectives on their worlds and more complex problem-solving skills, then their empathy for each other and insights about their communities will be all the stronger. This especially applies to young people living in underserved schools and societies where self-sustainment and breaking free of difficult conditions can be such an arduous undertaking.

The prominent and very outspoken art educator Maxine Greene (1995), who writes prolifically about community, poverty, and imagination, furthers the above point in her book titled, *Releasing the Imagination*. She writes, "It demands imaginative action many times for teachers to realize youngsters who see different (who have been reared in poverty or come from different places) have something to say about the way things might be if they were otherwise" (p. 34). In fact, it is the voices of these children that are missing from our collective story, our community story; one that clearly shows that those with the least amount of resources and familial ties are ones subject to underrepresentation in our societies. They have a right, just as every child has a right, to

practice using their imaginations, to dream bigger, and to participate wholeheartedly in changing their conditions.

Greene (1995) suggests that “excluded” people reap exceptional advantages from “imaginative thinking about alternative social arrangements and possibilities of things being otherwise” (p. 34), while wholeheartedly campaigning for the educational rights and artistic freedom of all citizens irrespective of their circumstances. With such empowerment, we begin to see and hear the voices of the disenfranchised as a greater collective narrative that is inclusive rather than exclusive, and leads to a recognition of the issues that might keep poverty cycles from repeating themselves. Within this narrative, young people can be encouraged to use their imaginations as tools of thought for accessing solutions breaking cycles of exclusion, thereby “enlarging experience” (p. 36) as a whole.

Maxine Greene (1995) presents a formidable argument for “empowering the imagination” and envisions how this helps children gain control over their lives. For Greene, “the recovery of imagination that lessens the social paralysis we see around us and restores the sense that something can be done in the name of what is decent and humane” subsequently lifts the fog that she professes so many citizens live beneath” (p. 35). It is under this condition of fog that a sort of “social paralysis” evolves that leads us to inaction and resignation. This line of thought bolsters the intent of this study to show that if tools and skills of artistry such as photography are shared with young people who may not have had access to any art programs, then new insights about themselves and their worlds can emerge and help them become a part of a larger and ongoing dialogue.

Greene (1995) expounds upon the importance of such experience and the connection to empathy and healing: “Participatory involvement, which the many forms of art can enable us to see more in our experience, to hear more on normally unheard frequencies, to become conscious of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and

convention have suppressed” (p. 123). Again she references the “fog” that descends upon us, that keeps us complacent, fearful, and therefore unadventurous in our lives, and worst of all, our educational systems and their continuing stagnation that strengthen these craven attitudes.

John Dewey (1934) elegantly defines the notion of experience and the importance of the arts in his book titled, *Art as Experience*:

Experience occurs continuously, because the interaction of live creature and enviroining conditions is involved in the very process of living. Under the conditions of resistance and conflict, aspects and elements of the self and the world that are implicated in this interaction qualify experience with emotions and ideas so that conscious intent emerges. (p. 35)

Dewey goes on to further expand upon experience as not just being charged with emotion and intent, but also something that needs to be “composed,” where a narrative can be built out of a series of experiences. In relation to the artist and the experience of making art, he proclaims the necessity of “intelligence in productions of art [based] upon identification of thinking with use of one special kind of material, visual signs, and words” (p. 46). The personal aspect of one’s art, and the differentiation between individuals’ work, is characterized first and foremost by the experiences of the creator. The maker’s intention must be recognizable in the “esthetic” aspect of the experience. “Esthetic,” according to Dewey, means that “experience [is] appreciative, perceiving, enjoying” the whole/all-around actions and doings of individuals, which denotes an occurrence that encompasses the completeness of a person where the practice of art, the ‘craftsmanship,’ so to speak, must arise out of the maker’s deep care “for the subject matter upon which the skill is exercised” (p. 48). Judith Burton’s (2009) more open and flexible view of development makes room for the kind of reflective practices and imaginative tools that enable new perspectives that Greene speaks for.

Burton (2009) underscores the importance of creative intelligence, setting it apart from regular intelligence, and interweaving the pioneer of creative intelligence research,

Viktor Lowenfeld's work, within her treatise titled, *Creative Intelligence, Creative Practice: Lowenfeld Redux*. She writes about "memory experiences as sources for creative action" (p. 326) and the significance that creative intelligence has for each stage of childhood. Although Lowenfeld was the first to delineate the concept of artistic developmental stages in children (Burton, 2009; Lowenfeld, 1960) and he is criticized by some for promoting a linear model of developmental junctures, his work highlights the many reasons artistic practice adds value in the lives of children and adolescents.

### **Gender-Based Health Disparities Overview in Latin America**

Health disparities and health inequalities are two key concepts that must be defined to better understand the issues female Latino children are subjected to during their life's course, especially those in orphanage care. Braveman (2006) defines health disparities/inequalities as "potentially avoidable differences in health (or in health risks that policy can influence) between groups of people who are more and less advantaged socially. These differences systematically place socially disadvantaged groups at further disadvantage on health" (p. 180). From my observations working in Latin American orphanages, female children are the most likely to be abandoned or given up for adoption because they are not seen as producers in their culture, but more as liabilities. Males are considered much more desirable because of their better-positioned opportunities for work and future monetary productivity for their families.

Latin America is comprised of many different cultures and societies inclusive of Central and South America and the outlying associated islands. The diversity of the populations, which include both indigenous groups and mixed groups of European and other ethnic descent, demonstrates that this area is not only a varied and vibrant region but also one in which female children, in particular, are considered vulnerable populations. From my observations, I argue that specifically, the abject poverty,

misogyny, and the marginalization of indigenous people and tribes are all causes of inequality and contribute to the oppression of female children in Latin America. For instance, there are fewer job and educational opportunities for females, and the machismo attitudes of Latin American society represent almost insurmountable obstacles for many young girls and women to overcome (Moran, 2003; Obregon & Waisbord, 2012).

Social determinant factors such as stress, poverty, scarcity of resources and education, high unemployment, lack of parental supervision, and ongoing gender inequality are all reasons why female children in particular suffer the most abuses. Yet, there are certainly a number of countries in Latin America that are starting to fund new and improved community-focused research, educative, and health initiatives, although it is largely up to the communities and local churches to provide these much needed resources, such as care for abandoned children, communal kitchens and activities, health centers, and religious centers (Izu, 2006; Moran, 2003).

This is one reason nuns are intrinsic to underserved Latin communities. From my understanding working with Catholic nuns in many different Latin American countries, certain communities of the Catholic Church train nuns to serve populations that rank highest in need of care and attention, such as the nuns pertinent to this dissertation. They all belong to the Hijas de la Misericordia de la Tor, which is an order of Saint Francis, and their main intent in life is to serve the poor. The institutions they form and the services they provide are often funded by private donations and largely overlooked by the government. To underscore the above, many studies have revealed that “a few institutions can be quite good (Gavrin & Sacks, 1963, as cited by Groark, McCall, & Fish, 2011, p. 524), but generally institutions do not provide an adequate rearing environment (e.g., Rosas & McCall, 2009, as cited by Groark et al., 2011, p. 524). Across such institutions described in literature, however, nearly all provide caregivers who deliver impersonal, perfunctory caregiving with little talking, sensitivity, or responsiveness to children” (Rosas & McCall, 2009, as cited by Groark et al., 2011, p. 524).



Through examination of social determinant risks and health disparities in Latina female children, certain factors come to light that might negatively influence their daily living conditions and access to equal care and benefits within their society. Social determinants, as applied to this specific population, are inclusive of “Early Childhood Development (ECG)” factors as outlined in the Commission of Social Determinants of Health (CSDH, 2008). These “include the physical, social/emotional, and language/cognitive domains,” all of which have a “determining influence on subsequent life chances and health through skills development, education, and occupational opportunities” (p. 3). The early years in a child’s life are a fundamental time developmentally that, if neglected, can be very hard to rectify later on down the line.

Through community and neighborhood-driven efforts toward obtaining “access to basic goods that are socially cohesive, that are designed to promote good physical and psychological well-being,” equal health and quality of healthcare can be achieved (CSDH, 2008, p. 4). It is via the community and participation of healthcare and aid workers that evidence emerges for successfully addressing the concerns of inequality for Latino female children within their society. As Wallace (2008) so eloquently expresses, “to value and pursue equity in health means that we engage in fair play, act with impartiality, and allow a sense of social justice to guide us” (p. 2). These objectives reside not just within the way we treat each other in American society, but should also be forwarded as global initiative goals that can potentially be realized worldwide.

### **Orphaned Children**

First and foremost, stress plays a huge factor in the young lives of Latina female children. “Poverty is an important determinant of health” (Johnson et al., 2008, p. 1691). This primary damaging factor for this group keeps them mired in a vicious cycle. The overruling attitudes of this seemingly never-ending series of poverty begetting poverty is

the powerlessness that is imbued in the ones caught up in a conundrum that seems so impossible to break out of. Selgaman (2000, as cited in Veale, Taylor & Linehan, 2000) notes that there is an “assumption of learned helplessness” (p. 134) where efforts to surpass their circumstances seems “futile” and feelings of worthlessness and helplessness are all the more reinforced for struggling individuals. Yet, it is the family unit that is broken down due to stress factors and maladaptive behavioral problems that are derived from such patterns.

In fact, family is the first part of “the fundamental institution for the development of the human being” and it is the “role family members play, and especially parents play as primary agents responsible for the child’s welfare” (Izu, 2006, p. 189). Yet, many children are taken out of their homes, abandoned, or put up for adoption, which in Latin America usually means they are left in church-run orphanages. At some point, we must consider a very important and controversial question: “When is poverty a valid reason for a parent to place a child for adoption?” (Carr, 2013, p. 86). This is not a judgment-based question, as harsh as it sounds. It is a reality in many Third World countries. “Poverty is not just a lack of food. It’s a culture of hopelessness, a culture that produces orphans. If children grow up without families, the chances of the breaking out of poverty are slim to none” (p. 86).

Institutionalized child-care generally provides a chance for children living in rural areas to be in closer proximity to the city, have access to food, medical care, education, and spiritual nourishment. This frees up parents’ time to be able to work, which then allows them to save the money they would spend on their children for other purposes. An important aspect to consider in this context is the exposure their children might gain to programs that grow their intellect and deepen their connections to one another and their culture. “Many children are abandoned, left at orphanages, not because their parents have died, but because their parents are too poor to care for them. Poverty colors a child’s world with fear, uncertainty, and desperation” (Carr, 2013, p. 86). In other words,

children who are taken from their homes or left in the care of an orphanage are often found in better positions than if they were to stay in their familial homes, although the emotional and mental turmoil these circumstances bring upon the child can rarely be circumvented. This is where the community is called upon to play a larger role in orphans' lives.

Phillip Darke and Keith McFarland (2014) expound upon the idea where:

one's identity is intimately connected with the community. Every person thus needs to be involved and integrated with the community, local and global if he is going to thrive ... orphaned and vulnerable children are no exception to this rule. It is community integration, the process of being made equals in society, which frees each of us to flourish as contributing members of society. (p. 55)

Therefore, the missing links for children who may feel abandoned by their familial unit or at odds with their standing in society necessitate further assistance for healthy integration. They require both self-acceptance and acknowledgment by others of their rightful place within the larger community. Here in this context orphanages provide settings for the nuns to oversee the day-to-day operations of the children's school/homecare while they are also charged with providing a spiritual foundation children can rely upon. In addition, the orphanage/school serves as a type of community center where activities and opportunities exist that incorporate the children into larger society while lending access to medical care and garnering donations for the underserved surrounding population.

In Latin America, many countries have gone through phases of "state assistance, which began after the crisis of the 1930's, when a great deal of attention was paid to the health and nutrition of the children of working mothers" (Izu, 2006, p. 187). Yet, many of these state programs fell by the wayside after the 1950s and "due to cost, it was not possible to meet the demand for childhood care." Again, these problems are "mostly due to limited resources" (p. 187). Thus, underserved children in Latin America routinely rely upon church-run programs that are completely separate from the government and that are

subsidized by the community and inconsistent donors. “Frequently, donor-funded programs are mainly driven by short-term and pragmatic considerations” (Obregon & Waisbord, 2012, p. 25). Funding and aid problems continue to plague most underserved communities in Latin America, and it is children who suffer the most because of this, as they are the most vulnerable of populations.

Adaptive, behavioral, and cognitive responses for Latina female children are grounded in the community and the actions people take in caring for them. Barbara Wallace (2008) writes about how “crucial” a “focus on the role of culture on maladaptive versus adaptive behaviors” is in such an environment (p. 11). “Social interactions play an important role in the health and illness of individuals. In health settings, providing/receiving social support is an indispensable component of communication” (Obregon & Waisbord, 2012, pp. 160-161). The creation of “social spaces most conducive to empowering dialogue” within unequal societies (pp. 160-161) can bolster the confidence levels of young children and adolescents who may not have the parental support they so desperately need. If they are empowered and have access to education, knowledge, and positive adult interactions, then maladaptive behaviors such as drug use, depression, joblessness, early pregnancy, and a variety of other such conditions might be avoided.

It is essential to understand the components of what initiates and sustains maladaptive behavioral changes in a young person or child. “There is a growing move away from information provision in favor of community strengthening, social participation, and partnership/alliance building approaches” (Obregon & Waisbord, 2012, p. 179). Through the empowerment of the community, the individual’s needs are not so neglected. In addition, the effect of positive reinforcement and strong communication upon young minds is integral in helping to keep young children and adolescents on track in life. In fact, all evidence does point to an overall “guiding rationale,” which “involves seeking to identify the underlying mechanisms that may be creating or sustaining disparities in health” (Wallace, 2008, p. 11). Latina female children, in particular, are a

highly vulnerable population due to their gender alone and face troubles within their society that their male counterparts oftentimes do not have to endure.

Cultural competence in healthcare for Latina female children encompasses a holistic approach to caring for the child and addressing her needs in an empathic and compassionate way. Healthcare must also address the mental state of said population, as Latina female children endure stress factors that negatively impact their health.

Vulnerable and poverty-stricken children face many problems such as:

- 1.) bad conditions of basic hygiene; 2.) high rates of disease; 3.) a higher rate than national average of acute malnutrition; 4.) deficits in the relationships to object, fine motor skills, and communication; 5.) inadequate practices of child-rearing; and 6.) low parent participation in childhood care. (Izu, 2006, p. 193)

Although there are many challenges in addressing all of these issues, conditions can be improved for this special population through advocacy and focus upon increasing parenting and familial participation in a child's life. Children who are abandoned by their families because of the overburdening of their family resources can, in some cases, become better off than siblings that are left in their home. Because they are exposed to new opportunities, they may receive a higher level of care, consistent meals, consistent spiritual sustenance, and access to education and regular instruction, which strengthen in many ways, their moral compasses.

The predicament of how to help orphaned children is a ubiquitous problem, but it can be seen as most prevalent in underdeveloped countries. The orphan population is alarmingly large and growing as resources are increasingly tapped out in countries where poverty is so widespread. In fact, UNICEF has "estimated that there are 153-million orphaned children worldwide" (Carr, 2013, p. 13) and "when a child grows up in an orphanage of 50 or 100 kids, he or she is robbed of the deep human need to be cared for and nurtured by a stable, loving parental figure. No matter how hard orphanage staff members try, it is impossible to create that safe haven relationship with more than a

handful of children” (pp. 70-71). If institutionalized care is such a flawed model of child care, just as most research and statistics suggest, then the aftermath of the children’s lives as they leave the orphanage becomes an even more crucial part of a bigger controversy that society must not overlook. In fact, society should take responsibility for structuring better long-term solutions for orphan care, education, and support from the community.

### **Building an Aesthetic**

The role of art education in the lives of underserved youth populations is one that is often overlooked; thus, some would argue, the “human experience” of this particular population is marginalized compared to those that are privy to holistic educative initiatives. Judith Burton (1994) persuasively argues that an arts practice in learning “must be substantive and focused on genuine acts of inquiry, imaginative exploration, and development of expertise: it must radiate back and forth informing and accommodating to insights and sensibilities derived from historical, cultural, aesthetic, critical, social, and all manner of other sources” (p. 482). This point leads us to the idea of first establishing a practice and then constructing one’s own artistic vision, which, of course, changes over time and progresses as the practitioner gains more experience.

Yet, the definition of art education differs from that of aesthetic education. As previously touched upon, Greene (2003) describes “aesthetic education” as

an intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what is there to be noticed ... when this happens new connections are made in experience: new patterns are formed, new vistas are open. (p. 6)

Through teaching the participants of this study, photo-making skills, and connecting them to digital platforms to share their output, they were able to home in on what themes were most important to their photo-making narratives and “explore different medias, where art education allows for many modes of expression, many modes of learning a craft, many

ways of leaving an imprint on the world” (p. 6). Art education and the construction of unique aesthetic visions are essential to “reflective encounters” (Greene, 2003, p. 18) and stimulation of the imagination. The building of an aesthetic in creating narrative photo-art making digital diaries was quite a lengthy process and one that continues for most of the participants to the present day.

Adolescents and young adults tend to enjoy experimenting with their identity formation (Turkel, 2011, p. 152), and there are many ways they can do that through the development of an arts practice. Burton (1994) further expounds upon the impact of art education during adolescence and how “culture offers a means for organizing complex ideas” and the “search” occurs “for new means of representation perspective [which] becomes part of the story” (p. 484). The construction of an aesthetic, the progressing of a young person’s narrative who is amidst multiple life transitions, becomes all the more imperative in that there is finally an outlet, apart from everyone and everything else, within which they may discover and learn in sometimes challenging but certainly innovative new ways.

### **Peru and Poverty**

“Poverty is not just a lack of food. It’s a culture of hopelessness, a culture that produces orphans” (Carr, 2013, p. 100). Over half the population of Peru lives in poverty (INEI, 1986, 2000, as cited in Leinaweaver, 2008), and education is considered the best way to improve oneself in Peruvian society. However, few young people seem to have a chance to engage in formal education due to the lack of schools and competitive application process to enter Peruvian universities (Leinaweaver, 2008). Therefore, the struggle of young people in general to achieve economic viability and freedom is a looming problem for a country with so few social services.

Furthermore, as previously emphasized, young girls in Latin America are usually at a much greater disadvantage than young boys. They are more likely to live outside their family homes in some type of fashion, whether it be in an orphanage or in such a manner that they are circulated out of their parents' home into another family member's household for either the long or short term. Accordingly, if even a small portion of children living in institutionalized care are exposed to people who care about them and invest time and energy into their future by teaching them skills and crafts, while also mentoring them on how to become productive members of society, then they are shown that there is hope for a better life. Though it must be stressed that one of the biggest hurdles for young adults living in underdeveloped countries is the lack of services offered to support them, there is limited access to viable jobs and opportunities (Moran, 2003). There are relatively few ways out of poverty for most young people whose social positions of their parents have either bypassed them completely or implicitly constrained them.

By familial social positions, this notion is, in part, based on the Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty (ITP) model, which is the "process by which poor parents pass on poverty and disadvantage to their children" (Moran, 2003, p. 1). This concept is crucial to understanding why so many children have been placed out of their homes in the first place, either permanently or temporarily, into institutionalized care. One needs to further grasp the interplay of how the indigenous population of Latin America, specifically, countries like Peru, Panama, and Colombia, are further hindered in their upward mobility endeavors according to statistical data (Moran, Castañeda, & Aldaz-Carroll, 2003). It is inherently desirable for most Peruvians to strive for better education and opportunity, and thus, the family dynamic can sometimes be dictated by the needs of the entire unit and dependent upon one member to move to a place where they may make more money at a job and can subsequently provide monetarily for their families.



Interestingly enough, specific data about Lima, Peru (Izu, 2006) concerning “quality and equity in early childhood care” show that early childhood educative programs are extremely helpful to parents and children alike, in that

these programs allow parents, especially mothers, to increase their labor force participation and earnings, increase their work experience, and work more hours. Children benefit from improved health care and nutrition, early stimulation, and other developmental activities provided by most of these programs. (Moran et al., 2003, p. 44)

Early childhood programs help children avoid the boredom of being at home with little entertainment and help them get used to educative environments. It must be noted that all programs that offer childhood play, exploration, and discovery add to the dimension of a child’s growth, heighten their levels of empathic response to their peers, and create substantial evolution in all manners of the growing child. The investment into early measures for providing educative childcare may seem onerous at first, but as time passes and certain cycles are broken, then the benefits of upfront investments in young people and young parents who are in need of extra assistance can be easily seen.

“The success of an economy and of a society cannot be separated from the lives that members of a society are able to lead” (Sen, 2003, p. 76). One must never lose sight of the fact that society needs their youth to strive to become productive members of the community and that proper mentorships, role models, support networks, counseling services, and youth service programs are all necessary for them to succeed. As already pointed out above, young people who may not have access to these types of resources due to their familial or monetary circumstances are understandably most in need of programs that can potentially bring together concepts such as peer relational connectivity, transcultural role models and mentorships, and collaborative art making, along with long-lasting community engagement and involvement. When enacted, these enterprises can all culminate in an effort to show young people there are other options out there that diverge

from the prevalent intergenerational poverty paradigm. This paradigm, although a largely inherited phenomenon, is one that in many cases can be preventable.

### **The Orphaned Circumstance**

The life of a child living in an orphanage is somewhat shrouded in mystery for most of outside society. What it means to be an orphan versus what it means to be a child living at an orphanage can be two very contrary concepts, and the circumstance of the child is individuated and not necessarily a static situation for him/her. For instance, there are different levels and terms used to describe children living under the institutionalized care system. They are labeled as the following: orphaned, abandoned, unaccompanied, and destitute (Panter-Brick & Smith, 2000, p. 2). There are also “single orphans” who have one parent that has passed away or disappeared and “double orphans” where both parents are not living or have disappeared (Panter-Brick & Smith, 2000). But these are rough categories that cannot really be used to sum up every child’s situation that comes through the system.

In fact, the conditions of children considered as abandoned or without family are often not fully understood, as there are usually a series of complex issues at play that lead to their placement into institutionalized care in the first place. As the researchers for the book, *Abandoned Children* point out:

Thus it is possible to see that ‘abandonment’ has become a kind of moral rhetoric used to justify continued policies of rescue and redemption together with their tendency to stigmatize the poor, from Renaissance orphanages to late twentieth-century non-governmental projects for “street children.” (Panter-Brick & Smith, 2000, p. xvi)

In essence, “abandoning” one’s child has strenuous political innuendo in the way this term is used, and one must be discerning when utilizing such a loaded word. There are countless distinctions that describe each child’s circumstance when they are in a system of institutionalized care. The orphaned child’s circumstance is a collective and highly

political issue, interwoven with the frustrating politics of adoption and the contrary policies of the government and of what the actual caretakers of the children believe is best for them and their futures. The ongoing and unfortunate interplay of the child's family, caretakers, teachers, and the government's interference in their lives on some level all come together in a somewhat confusing and contradictory manner.

The fact remains that children are living in institutionalized care for a variety of reasons, and not all stay there for the duration of their childhood—some come and go, some have family members or even parents or grandparents that they can go home to on the weekends. Others have no family members to speak of and must remain at their school/orphanage year round, unless they have an outside sponsor willing to help take care of their living expenses and take them in on weekends and holidays. However, this model of care (that of recruiting the sustainment of outside sponsorships from the community) varies from place to place.

The familial relations of a child placed in institutionalized care are often very much a part of the child's ongoing community, his or her "old relationships continue" and "children do not lay aside their previous attachments and associations by a mere placement to a new care setting" (Maier, 1987, p. 80). This point cannot be stressed enough, as the entire story of a child and his/her relationships on the outside bear great importance toward his/her forming new relations on the inside of the new caregiver model. The maintaining of familial contact can serve the child in many ways, both good and bad, yet the "interweaving" of home life and group care suggests a "shift away from conceiving placement in a linear model" (Maier, 1987, p. 81). Children's individual situations are supported, and their old community and new community impact their progression into adulthood. Whether their stay in institutionalized care is long-term, short-term, or until they age out bears great importance on when they finally become old enough to leave their care situations and enter adult society.

“Remedial action in the best interest of the child—as stressed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child—is not a matter of ‘saving’ children, but of listening to them, of fostering child participation” (Panter-Brick & Smith, 2000, p. 12). Despite the overwhelming circumstances of children who are in situations that are so full of strife and discord, who must live permanently or semi permanently in institutionalized care, caregivers must not overlook their very real needs to be stimulated intellectually and artistically. It is true that they require other basic necessities for survival, yet, to further develop as empathic and compassionate members of society, children and adolescents require much more than to have their basic needs met. Intellectual, spiritual, and creative stimuli combined with further motivation from outside community members and educators are as essential as food and water for growing and curious minds.

The model for orphan care does vary dramatically across cultures. According to UNICEF, “an estimated 143-million children live without permanent parents in 93 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean (UNAIDS, UNICEF, USAID, 2004), and UNICEF estimated an additional 1.5-million in Central and Eastern Europe” (Nelson, 2007, as cited in McCall, Groark, Fish, Harkins, & Gordon, 2011). Institutionalized care models have routinely been found to be inadequate in terms of providing satisfactory care to orphaned children, thus “developmental delays” routinely occur in this severely neglected and underserved population (Rosas & McCall, 2009, as cited in McCall et al., 2011). Despite the above statistics, many orphanages in Latin America succeed in creating a nurturing family-caregiver type of environment while also forwarding educative initiatives for the children they serve.

Moreover, there have been numerous intervention programs aimed at “reducing the number of different caregivers, increasing their consistency in children’s lives, and promoting warm, caring, sensitive, and responsive caregiver-child interaction” (McCall et al., 2010, p. 524) within orphan care homes. The major factor emerging from these types of studies and intervention programs points to an obvious fact of “socio-economic

factors as being a major corrosive factor in many institutions” (pp. 524-525). Study after study point to the now obvious: severe lack of funding is the universal ailment of underserved communities and institutionalized care homes for abandoned children.

For example, a pilot intervention program and Latin American study funded by The Whole Child International and based on principles “drawn from the WestEd program for Infant-Toddler care” (Gonzalez-Mena, 2005; Lally, 1990; Lally, Mangione, & Young-Holt, 1992, as cited in McCall et al., 2011) and the Pikler Institute of Budapest, Hungary (Taros, 2007) cited in their study some key guiding principles in caregiver models to be effected in an unidentified orphanage in Latin America. The researchers do not describe the orphanage as having a religious affiliation of any sort and refer to the staff as caregivers who are paid for 12-hour shifts with two to three days off. The doctrine that was to be instilled at this locale was four-pronged and promoted an agenda of time management. Caregivers had more one-on-one time with children from birth to 8 years of age that they were caring for, especially during bathing and feeding times. Staff care was continuous and stayed consistent, providing ample space for children to move and grow with access granted to “plentiful, safe, and developmentally appropriate materials during their waking hours” (McCall et al., 2011, p. 526). These aims are no easy task for the training teams or trainees, as there are the usual monetary concerns and unprecedented issues that inevitably come up in circumstances such as these and the structuring of the differing wards within the actual orphanage. By “wards” I mean the sectioning off of children according to age and needs. From what I have seen, most orphanages have designated sets of dormitories where children of certain ages reside and large bathrooms to accommodate each dormitory. If there are sick children (those diagnosed with HIV for instance), they are housed separately.

To circle back to the results of the aforementioned pilot study, the specifications of the effectiveness of training caregivers of young children, properly providing compensation, and establishing a model of mindfulness and effective time management

on behalf of the staff were the recommendations of the collective researchers. But the reality remains that very few institutionalized living circumstances for children are able to sustain such a high-level quality of care. Through my personal experience, the Catholic model relies less on the concept of remuneration and more upon the idea of service to the people. In one sense, they are duty-bound to the populace they aid, yet a majority of Catholic orphanages forward the idea of community, participation, unity, spirituality, compassion, and tolerance for differences. This notion may be contrary to what many may think about Catholic institutions. If one were to further analyze the relationships of certain communities of nuns working, many in some cases as mavericks in their own religion in that they place the needs of their people above and even beyond the needs of the Church, some might be surprised, as I have been, to find out that nuns, especially the ones who have devoted their life to their communities, are highly capable, forward-thinking, and educated women who actually look to empower the children who are entrusted to them.

### **Aging Out of Orphanages**

Thus far, I have found very little research on the subject of aging out of orphanages in Latin America and the outcomes and services that are provided for youth that are transitioning to the outside world. If domestic research is any indicator of how young people have grown up in foster care and/or institutionalized care, maybe it can give some hint of what orphaned children living in Latin America experience and could be a good place to start to gain insight into the issues these young girls face.

For instance, Christina S. Acoff (2008) cites significant research for her master's thesis, which illustrates the disadvantages of growing up in foster care and "aging out" into society without resources or skills that serve young people in the outside world. In the United States, transitioning foster care youth take classes to learn budgeting skills and

job and house-seeking abilities (Acoff, 2008). This is just one example of how necessary it is to promote the transmission of life skills to youth in need; although most would deem these qualities to be rudimentary and common sense, this is an area that is often lacking in their experience. Again, it is very unclear yet what resources countries like Peru, with struggling economies, can offer to at-risk youth. The United States clearly has a long way to go, but providing small services to help with life, jobs, and educational skills can go quite far with impressionable young people who are hungry for direction and purpose.

If the socio-cultural community does not play a larger part in the lives of orphaned children or foster care children, then there is a high price to pay in terms of the vicious cycle of lives riddled with self-destructive and harmful behavior that can affect all members of society. The whole of humanity is implicated in the lives of children and young people who have lost their parental homes and fallen into the endless poverty trap. The subsequent causes of homelessness that are produced from these scenarios can only worsen if more attention is not paid to such burgeoning issues.

An example here can be found in a study done in Russia on approximately 15,000 children. The resulting evidence demonstrated that “within a few years after aging out of the orphanages, about 5,000 of the 15,000 children were unemployed, about 6,000 were homeless, around 3,000 had committed a crime, and approximately 1,500 committed suicide” (UNICEF, 1997, as cited in Darke & McFarland, 2014). Again, it is difficult to compare statistics from country to country, but one can easily glean that children who have lived in institutionalized care homes are certainly going to be up against a great deal of challenges, mainly that of learning how to provide and care for themselves outside of their earlier insular existence.

It follows that the age of adolescence, a period of time that occurs where so much shifts in a young person, is when one truly needs a great deal of support and access to resources. Researchers McCall et al. (2010) write: “Emerging adulthood holds particular interest for the study of risk and resilience because this period may afford important

changes in functional capacity, vulnerabilities, and opportunities that may play an important role in altering the life course” (p. 177). This juncture in a young person’s life, the sort of purgatory between adolescence and young adulthood, is a critical phase where a range of factors needs to be carefully considered.

### **Adolescence**

Adolescence is a time when children are developing a sense of “I” and “self definition” (Kroger, 2009). It is a tender period when young people are on the brink of entering into early adulthood, and “interpsychic restructuring during adolescence brings identity questions to the surface” (p. 7). Essentially, adolescents are in the midst of forming new kinds of relationships while also testing boundaries, where then an “optimal sense” of identity becomes the hope for all young people, and a “sense of well-being” is achieved (Kroger, 2009, p. 23; see also Erikson, 1968).

Since it can be easily argued that adolescence is a fundamental time in a person’s life when the process of growing into themselves and establishing their beliefs and opinions on a multitude of subjects is strikingly apparent (Burton, 2011; Kroger, 2009), it follows that adolescents, particularly young girls, are on a voyage of sorts to discover how to interpret and relate to the world around them. Their inner lives are saddled with the day-to-day tribulations of assimilating their consistently evolving beliefs with the environment in which they are being raised (Kagan, 1971; Kroger, 2009). Yet, adolescence, despite its onslaught of vulnerabilities, volatilities, and other such associations, is also where we can find the last vestiges of childhood.

In a recent article in the *New York Times* titled, “Why Teenagers Act Crazy,” the author, Richard Freidman (2014), speaks about the “social and emotional challenges” many teenagers face and the connections scientists are finding in the “quirk of brain development.” The author explains why adolescents “on average, experience more



anxiety and fear and have a harder time not to be afraid than either children or adults” (p. 1). The science behind the brain development of adolescents is one very large piece to the puzzle of why so many teenagers behave the way they do and waver between feeling afraid and uncertain while also being considered impulsive and compulsive. The fact that the brain matures at different rates and that the region responsible for reasoning and fear processing, called the amygdala, is one of the last regions to develop (p. 1) is yet one more dimension that must be carefully considered when working with this age group. Ironically, it is usually the adolescent age group that begins to be routinely left out of continuing art skill development in their educative trajectories, which seems so strangely counterintuitive.

Judith Burton (2011) speaks about the “advent of puberty” and the “distinctive and often difficult time in the journey towards adulthood” (p. 6). In her work titled, *Creative and Mental Growth Revisited*, she points out the “inequalities in art education ... that many school art programs do not address adolescent needs, interests, and questions” (p. 9), consequently leaving out a huge demographic that could greatly benefit from acquiring more proficient artistic abilities. The onset and ubiquities of technology in today’s times may have somewhat eased the thirst most adolescents seem to have to create and to make their individuated marks upon the world and society. Burton goes on to address the many advantages technology offers in way of virtual museums, social media platforms, computer art skills (drawing, 3-d sculpture, etc.), and photo editing and video editing programs. The list is endless in what technology can provide in these types of artistic skill sets, but there are some concerns about technology and its impact upon our youth.

Young people in Western society are becoming increasingly dependent upon their computers, phones, and devices, whereas it has in some instances become problematic. Clearly, technology is beneficial to teenagers in that it opens up new avenues of ways to create art, to design graphically and learn about the world with just a few clicks of a

button on a computer. Technology and media can help bring important social causes that were once hidden to the forefront by providing access to online groups catering to marginalized populations or young people in need of support. Sites such as Facebook and Instagram have reunited long-lost friends and family members and created an easier forum for those hoping to keep in contact with their foreign friends and family from afar. The list of benefits is truly endless, if such Internet and social media use is not abused.

The growth of technology and its influence upon our collective youth can also be depleting and stunting on other levels, creating isolation for some, while opening up potential dangers for teens from outside influences and exposure that may not be so healthy. This ties into Burton's (2011) point that there is "a debate at present about the social consequences of spending considerable time alone with a computer" (p. 13), which in fact is sharply contrasted to the circumstances of young people in studies similar to my investigation who have had very little access to technology. This was an initial worry I had when I began the project, although I also recognized immediately that this would be the first time the participants would actually learn how to use technology to create photo-narratives and employ social media in personal ways to share our collective stories when we were not together as a group. However they may have intellectually and emotionally assimilated their time in institutionalized care, young girls living apart from their family are at a particularly complex touchstone in their lives when they face various pressing adult decisions as they leave their place of residence. Accordingly, this study aimed to employ avenues of creativity, technology and the growth of an artistic community around such goals to address their needs going forward.

Simon Sinek (2016), a present-day expert on technology and the effects of such on our youth, speaks about the consequences of technology, especially upon millennials (born 1994 and after) and the addiction "high" of responsivity one receives when engaging in social media and texting. "The trauma" a kid feels "when they are unfriended" or their "likes" are not up to par on Instagram or Facebook or any other

social media platforms, is a sobering reality for younger generations and even more so for generations to come. The constant need for “approval,” especially during the onset of adolescence, is particularly delicate as the formation of “deep, meaningful relationships” is decreasing due to devices, social media etc. to obtain “temporary relief” to cope with adverse events within one’s life (Sinek, 2016).

Sherry Turkle (2011) points out both numerous concerns and praise concerning the way people interact with technology and its potential interference with social interactions and growth of meaningful and “authentic relationships” (p. 4). Her largest concern revolves around connectivity and how technology affects society in an increasingly higher level. She writes, “People love their new technologies of connection. They have made parents and children feel more secure and have revolutionized businesses, education, scholarship, and medicine. The global reach of connectivity can make the most isolated output into a center of learning and economic activity” (p. 152). She points out that one of the greatest advantages here about technology is in fact the advent of educational initiatives that possess the ability to reach impoverished and underserved communities as long as access to internet, computers, and devices is readily available. Turkle goes on to say,

Connectivity offers new possibilities for experimenting with identity and, particularly in adolescence, the sense of free space, what Erik Erikson called the moratorium. This is a time, relatively consequence free, for what doing what adolescents need to do: fall in and out of love with people and ideas. Real life does not always provide this kind of space, but the Internet does. (p. 152)

It should be pointed out that at the orphanage cited in this dissertation, there is but one chair in a corner where the residents can go if they want to access wireless Internet. This option was only just provided to them a few weeks before my arrival by my initial contact at the Hogar. The nuns personally possess two or three computers, which they share, and the girls have about nine computers that they share in a library that has no Internet. Thus, the chances of the participants to this study actually spending long periods

alone with their devices were increasingly unlikely, as their days were dictated by chores, their school schedules, and caring for the younger children, which all left very little free time to be idle.

The fact that the participants of this study did not have exposure of any type to real internet usage or social media was an interesting notion inasmuch that preliminary studies have revealed some rather negative effects of “screen time,” especially for young children. Steiner-Adair (2013) makes claims that the onslaught of tech culture can have a hugely negative impact upon young and developing minds. Especially if it is not properly monitored, it may cause tremendous disconnections, particularly during adolescence, which she describes as: “associated with the eruption of serious psychological issues, a time where underlying anxiety and depression creep to the surface, where emotions and intensity become unmanageable, where early childhood traumas resurface”. Yet she points out that “in some instances media and social networking have been the means by which troubled teens seek help or are identified by others who reach out to them.” (p. 219). In this manner, social media can be helpful, but on the other side of things, there are addictive components to technology—and especially the Internet.

Even if websites such as Facebook and Instagram can be helpful to society in its global connectivity, the “compulsive” oversharing of photos and videos can potentially wreak havoc on young people’s lives and minds. They become so thoroughly entrenched in keeping up their appearances on social media sites that their real life peer and familial relationships suffer. Yet, most would argue that this seems to be a largely Westernized problem, as all of the gadgets and smartphones are quite expensive and not so available in impoverished communities. There are consistent costs associated with internet plans, and one must have access to WIFI on an ongoing basis in order to be constantly using their computers, tablets, or smart phones. Thus, the nature of the family unit in underserved communities is quite different in that respect from that of richer societies. There is a healthier dynamic on a humanistic level according to my experience; because people are

forced to consistently relate to one another, there simply are far fewer distractions. Steiner-Adair (2013) writes about the notion of a “sustainable family,” one that is an “ecosystem, hardy, diverse, resilient, fragile” where members create and share an environment that is uniquely theirs; they are interconnected” (p. 261). The idea of connectivity is at the forefront of this dissertation’s aims, and it has stirred up contrasting notions of how technology can serve one population and divide another, this all being based on the idea of privilege.

Davies and Eynon (2013) corroborate such reasoning that teenagers and technology inevitably become inextricably linked and suggest that it is “during the teenage years that young people most intensively develop, share, and establish their own repertoire of technology-enabled activity, forming a set of practices that—though always to some extent are in a state of flux—will remain with them through their studies and on into their working lives” (p. 1). The authors go on to point out that such technology can be particularly helpful when teenagers are in the midst of dramatic change in their lives and seeking that “autonomy and self-determination of adulthood” (p. 1). Again this opinion ties in with a somewhat universal notion that most teenagers have the privilege of access. Increasingly, this may be so, but if one examines the statistics on poverty levels all around the world, it is clear that access is limited for a majority of young people, and as much as technology can be an aid in a growing individual’s life, it can also be a hindrance. In other words, there must be some balance between “real life” and life with a device.

### **Mobile Learning**

Technology can enhance the experience of co-learning in the sector of sustainability, especially when it entails students and teachers that are not in the same locale or cross-cultural teaching that involves teachers who must travel to foreign

communities and establish a lesson plan or educative initiatives and then keep it going from afar. There are some key features to consider here in mobile learning, flexibility, informality (on some levels), and most of all, mobility. Learners are less subjugated to a scheduled time to meet; although assignments and work are most often kept to a timeline of sorts, this is all dependent upon the teacher or facilitator of learning. The expectations are usually laid out from the start and undertaken through group activity and ongoing dialogue (Naismith, 2005, p. 27).

The dialectic nature of mobile learning is perhaps one of the more intriguing aspects of this theory, as learning becomes a constant flow that is not fixed in one space for a set amount of time. “Dynamic” (Naismith, 2005, p. 7) is a useful adjective to describe what might result in an experience that is rewarding for the learner, as long as she/he is actively engaged and held accountable. By “accountable,” I mean that the student must be gauged on some level by the educator and maybe even by his/her peers through their form of participation and contribution to the overall experience.

In order to fully define what mobile learning is, we must first define “formal learning” according to the definition provided by the researchers (Curinger & Saravanos, 2016) under the terms of Traxler (2009), where “formal learning is characterized by groups of learners, curricula, courses, semesters, assessments, and physical campuses” (p. 24). Mobile learning could be argued by some (such as Traxler) that it falls under the domain of “informal learning,” which is learning that takes place outside the typical classroom environment, yet he sees it at “odds with” formal learning (p. 24). Curinger and Saravanos point out that there are burgeoning and numerous multi-faceted platforms that now support more formalized mobile learning, such as Blackboard and Moodle, and though their position is one that is not exactly opposed to Traxler’s, their research expounds upon the ways that mobile learning is continuing to expand avenues in which we can acquire new knowledge and not take away from the experiential quality of formal learning.

There is a design aspect to consider for mobile learning, which is key to creating applications and platforms that are user friendly and focus on the “useful experience of the user” (Curinger & Saravanos, 2016, p. 25). The principles of such an experience revolve around social interaction of the participants, engagement with the material presented by the teacher, and assessment of such engagement and contributions of learners to the overall agenda (p. 26). This allows mobile learning initiatives to mirror more formal learning criteria and supports the idea of a “structured” approach that is streamlined, inclusive, and innovative. The researchers conclude that design is one of the most important aspects of mobile learning because of its capacity to aid educators in their abilities “to reflect and reevaluate their practices and commitments” (p. 34).

The largest hiccup in mobile learning for purposes of this study was the actual access to wifi and updated mobile devices. The refurbished Samsung Galaxy tablets were somewhat outdated and could not support large video uploading with such little internet capacity; thus, the eight participants were not able to fully participate all of the time, and I had to essentially downgrade the study from a “video-making” project to a “photo-art making” endeavor. Also, the issue of safety was, of course, a very large consideration. The girls I worked with lived in an unsafe and impoverished community where devices were a rarity, as were flip-top phones (one girl even had her flip-top stolen at knifepoint while commuting from the orphanage to her first-year college).

The idea of collaborative learning that is technology assisted is one that was forwarded in the art educative experience. The sharing of the photo-art making practice and the imprint of such proved to be an effectual teaching/learning pedagogy that did in fact endure for most of the participants. In this specified case, technology enhanced the experience of co-learning in the sector of sustainability, especially because it involved the principal researcher and participants in a dynamic that was tailored to their specific needs.

The collaborative learner model that most supports this dissertation work is that of experiential collaborative learning. The act of sharing an experience and the imprint of such is one of the most effectual teaching/learning pedagogies that have endured the test of time. Collaborative mobile learning again would result in a platform that is group-oriented, yet it may lack intimacy on some level and direct human contact is lost, which is not exactly optimal for a full-on learning paradigm. Thus, as with most learning theories, it is one that is highly situational and worked well for the purposes of this particular study and learning initiative.

### **Cross-Cultural Art Education**

Art education in most Catholic and government-run orphanages is not necessarily a priority due to ongoing subsidizing issues; this is compounded by the fact that most of these schools usually view art as being somehow superfluous (Adejumo, 2002). Yet, art can connect people of different cultures in ways that many other activities cannot (Chalmers, 1996; McFee, 1998, as cited in Hubbard, 2009). In a substantive compendium created by the United Nations in 2006, the topic of art education and its place for development in the 21st century was targeted as a resource for students to evolve their “creative experiences, processes, and development” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2009, p. 3). Perhaps most importantly, the point was emphasized that “the arts are both the manifestation of culture as well as the means of communication of cultural knowledge” (p. 6), although strategies must continually be developed on how to provide universal quality-based education and further support art programs that are either dwindling or nonexistent in underserved or impoverished communities.

As cultural differences must be accounted for within a comprehensive educative plan, the United Nations asserts that the past and present impact of the arts greatly



contributes to the overall higher educational schema. A course of action, they suggest, should be formulated for what best fits the needs of arts students relative to their respective regions. An “intercultural perspective, inspired by scholarship in other areas” such as the arts “which treat student’s own cultures as one of many worthy of study” (Davenport, 2000, p. 372) comes into play. This approach must begin with the development of an educator’s multi-cultural and cross-cultural global educational framework (Seeberg & Minick, 2012). Research points to the fact that educators would benefit most from direct practice with “others in global contexts rather than just learning about them” in theory or in books (p. 2). This kind of learning is enhanced by experiences and increased worldly exposure rather than solely classroom and book-centric methodology.

Notably, a teacher who has experienced what it feels like to be an outsider, to be unfamiliar with the traditions and language of a particular culture and to feel the fear and uncomfortable workings of a situation such as this, is better equipped to empathize with students who are foreigners in their domestic classrooms (Hubbard, 2009). Teachers who have trained in foreign lands can relate to students that have been uprooted from their own places of origin, and this so-called “culture shock” (Hall, 1989, as cited in Hubbard, 2009) becomes common ground for the student and teacher. Therefore, immersion into a specified culture is extremely beneficial for educators who wish to fully appreciate the transcultural experience. Hubbard (2009) writes of this in her work on her unique experiences in Africa and Mexico:

Being immersed in a different culture encourages examination of cultural assumptions and prejudices. Without such an immersion experience, the natural tendency is to project onto others one’s own cultural perspective as the correct one—a type of cultural blindness. (p. 41)

This aligns with the perspective that worldly experience greatly contributes to a teacher’s cultural understanding alongside the establishment of a thoughtful and well-rounded education (UNESCO, 2009).

The most crucial facet in effective cross-cultural art educative pedagogy is the stance that the educator takes toward his/her students. The cross-cultural educator must be incredibly mindful and sensitive to the discourse, language, examples, and overall attitudes he/she chooses to use when teaching students of another culture. This is an area of study that needs increased consideration and research, as there are more and more people working transculturally that could benefit from a broader and more diverse range of resources for educative pedagogies that encompass cultural differences and language barrier issues.

### **Summary**

This chapter focused on the literature regarding the research questions and issues surrounding this dissertation. The focus was on the effectiveness of art education objectives in underserved communities, the complexities of adolescence and identity formation, the role of institutionalized care homes and the Catholic Church, and the implications and outcomes for children who are aging out of their orphanages. A brief overview of the poverty and problems that plague Peru and health disparities among Latina females and the obstacles that they face within their society was also provided.

Because technology was introduced into the lives of the eight participants and two nuns for the first time to aid the study's aims, the chapter also examined the pros and cons of social media and the internet and examined current studies of the phenomenon of burgeoning technology use in global society. The outcome of this dissertation hinged upon the question of how the creation of a photo-sharing, collaborative "art network" for young girls who are leaving their orphanage might empower these young women while also seeking to determine the outcomes of the young girl's lives by means of their art-sharing.

This is a highly specified subject; thus, little research has been conducted on the topic of “aging out” of institutionalized care homes. Therefore, this is where the thematic analysis of the eight subjects and two nuns further primed this area of focus. The concentration of the literature provided backdrop to the ideas behind the study while informing areas of interest that related to the overall objectives of this dissertation. The subsequent chapters intend to substantiate the assertions that providing a supportive art education network and sharing platform, while maintaining a consistent dialectic nature to this unique system, can in fact demonstrate positivistic outcomes in the lives of young people who are transitioning out of orphan care.

## Chapter III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

This was an investigative study that utilized ethnographic interviewing techniques, narrative inquiry, and a Participatory Research Methodology model to collect data that I could later analyze for emergent themes. The data consisted of face-to-face interviews, short videos and photographs collected from the girls via social media websites, multiple Skype conversations, and personal journaling and observations.

The project consisted of seven subjects to whom I gave computer devices and also included two of the teachers and one other girl who already had their own devices. I showed them how to use the various editing options, filters, and programs of Instagram and Tumblr interface. The intention was to share their work online so that I could access their video journals and photo narratives. The ongoing dialectical nature of this project was designed to bring to the surface significant themes relating to the girls' identities as they transitioned from their orphanage into the outside world.

I also created a personal journal for notes when visiting the project site in Puente Piedra, Peru, so that I could make personal observations regarding day-to-day life of the eight subjects, and began the process of composing overarching profiles for each girl. I created questions for the preliminary interviews with protocols derived from a review of the literature and field-tested prior questions. The interviews were primarily based upon getting to know the girls while learning to understand the circumstances of their arrival at

the Hogar. Two of the participants in this study were selected by the head nun, Madre Alexandrina, Rosa and Angie, who then helped to select the other six based on who they believed would be the most responsible and possessed the enthusiasm and drive necessary to sustain the project work.

### **Overview**

Initially, I planned to utilize a blogging and shared video/photography website called Tumblr much more than I actually did for collecting data. This idea was scrapped during the first few weeks because of the numerous issues with the internet service at the Hogar and uploading large files such as videos became impossible. Thus, my primary source of data was derived from the interviews, conversations, personal observations, journaling and the analysis of the eight participants' photos on Instagram. The first week, when I spent the largest amount of time in Peru, I acquainted the girls with the equipment and ran training and information sessions to lay out the ideas and goals of the project while familiarizing the participants with the use of their devices and the internet. Additionally, I sound-recorded each girl's background story and answered questions they had regarding the nature of the work we were to undertake. I thought it was essential that the girls were able to contribute their perspectives and suggestions during the preliminary stages.

I attended Mass with them on Sunday, partook in their day-to-day activities, shared meals with them, played volleyball and joined in other such outdoor games and sports, while also learning about the communities each girl came from and, most importantly, about Puente Piedra, where they all initially resided. I wanted to immerse myself in their society and hopefully put them at ease as we began to work on the training component of the project and conversed openly about one another's lives. These various steps ultimately led me to the model of a Participatory Community Research program that

would involve a true collaboration between myself as the principal researcher and allow the participants to become coauthors of this experience. The consistent dialogue among myself, the young women, and the two nuns over the 16-month duration of the study drove the development of significant themes and identification of sub-indicators within the themes for the dissertation findings.

### **Type of Study**

This dissertation was a qualitative research design study that relied upon a mixed methodology for collecting and analyzing data. The data were derived from several primary sources, including interviews, audiotaping, participatory observation, journal note-taking, and ongoing conversations with the eight girls and two nuns throughout the 16-month study via social media, Skype, and email. I also designated specific weeks to travel back to Peru two or three times during the 16 months to follow up with the girls face to face and meet with the nuns to learn about any developments or changes at the Hogar or with the participants as they transitioned out of the orphanage.

The type of interviews that I conducted was two-fold: ethnographic, “where the value of the interview lies in its focus on culture through the participant’s perspective and through a firsthand encounter,” and narrative, where the inquiry is a “mutual and sincere collaboration, a caring relationship akin to friendship that is established over time for full participation in the storytelling, retelling, and reliving of personal experiences” (Jason et al., 2002 p. 123). The narrative method of inquiry bears particular significance to the type of art project that the girls completed over the course of 16 months.

This relationship between the participants and researcher is referred to as Participatory Research, which involves a collaborative style of approach where ultimately action type research evolves out of a process that is fundamentally shared between all of the group members involved (Jason et al., 2004). Participatory Research essentially

marries the idea of an organizational framework existing to sustain an academic and community outreach approach geared toward prevention of certain social problems. Thus, the theory of “academic-community collaboration” (p. 88) is one that informed the entirety of this project and will be further examined as the study progresses.

It is important to remember that, when conducting research, one is also placed in the role of a “participant-observer” who is an ethnographic researcher; thus, the undertaken study was intended to be rooted within the community and the partnerships they formed. “The participant-observer attempts to generate the data from the perspective of the individuals being studied” (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 284); this point essentially means that as an observer that is working within a society and collecting data on their activities and personal profiles, ethnographic research must be “comprehensive, that is continuing and total. The observer attempts to record all relevant information in an unobtrusive way; consequently, observation is quite unstructured” (p. 284). The type of relationship that is fashioned here is one of mutual respect and learning that is in tandem, so to speak, where observation occurs and is conducted by said researcher in a way that he/she is placed in the position of a “privileged observer” (p. 284). This concept is paramount to respecting multi-cultural populations and for conducting research that is ethical and respectful of the needs of the population being studied. Researchers and educators that are not, in fact, directly from the community they wish to examine and who are considered “outsiders” must practice extreme care in the way they interview, ask questions, gather data, and observe their participants, because the relationship is one that is mutually beneficial in terms of co-learning.

For example, formal interviews may be too stressful on some participants or too formal in nature. In ethnographic and community-based participatory research, one must keep in mind that “casual and informal interviewing can be done when an occasion presents itself during observation. Questions might be asked of those being observed in attempt to clarify what is happening or in an attempt to capture those being observed”

(Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 286). These are poignant arguments in the case of the participants in this study because in observing the girls in their natural environment, a true attempt to create a narrative of their everyday lives evolved over time. It was necessary to spend time in their natural environment, amongst the influences and activities that affect their identities and contribute to how they come to make important decisions for their lives in the future.

A relationship of trust and respect is the pillar to forming long-term and viable support of such individuals, and occasionally structured interviews may work against the overall end goal. The researcher should not feel as if they are requiring that their participants engage in answering questions that they are uncomfortable with addressing directly. In other words, the population that I was specifically studying was quite delicate and vulnerable in a fundamentally multilayered way. I did not want them to feel as though they were being subjected to scrutiny they might have perceived as negative in any respect or that they would be made to feel even worse about their situations or not give truthful answers. The role of ethnographic and community-based participatory research is to “contribute to solving problems” while also “identifying the most important and key issues to be addressed” (Wiersma & Jus, 2009, p. 300) and to avoid placing undue stress on subjects.

The primary component of my methodology is what is referred to as Participatory Community Research, which is a “strategy that actively involves research participants in the development and implementation of the research process” (Jason et al., 2004, p. 17) and where “shared power between researchers and community participants is an essential element” (p. 10). The participants are essentially in harmony with the goals of the researcher, and the process becomes one that is coauthored and not solely written from the point of view of the so-called “expert in the field” (Jason et al., 2004). Participatory Community Research was strongly suited to my goals of engaging further social action and responsibility in identifying a certain topic that has yet to be thoroughly examined,



thus giving a voice to those who have not had adequate representation in broader society. In addition, Participatory Community Research supports the idea that research from this perspective is non-elitist, and although the subjects are not “experts,” so to speak, in the field of inquiry being examined, they are, in fact, representatives of their own voice and, therefore, have a right to establish the content and trajectory of the research.

Jan Irgen Karlsen (1991) furthers the above concepts by explaining the “process of change” as it relates to “participator-based” actions, which “means that those who are affected will also take part in defining which problems are to be treated.” This compares to the “participator controlled” actions, which means, “that they will be in a position to participate in making decisions about what measures are to be implemented” (p. 146). The overarching goals of Participatory Community Research are based upon two systems involving the role of the participants and their initiative to make change that is significant to their circumstances and that may benefit in the future those who are experiencing similar conditions.

### **Rationale for Methodology**

This study was a single bound, eight-unit narrative case study consisting of interviews of the eight young participants and two nuns who preside over the orphanage. This study took place over the course of 16 months and at first involved 10 days of intensive arts workshops where I, along with volunteers from my nonprofit organization, taught the girls about the fundamentals of video making and photography and built upon their repertoires from there. In addition, I aimed to create an educational and artistic framework from which they could work when forming their stories and collecting artwork, which supported their video and photo-making journals.

In using a mixed-method mode of inquiry to interview the girls, I was able to at least partially address some of the concerns that were brought up in the pilot study that I

conducted in Medellin, Colombia in 2013. Namely, my organization (Aurelius for the Arts), consisting of both volunteer art teachers and non-art teachers, fervently wished to shed any preconceived cultural proclivities and avoid endowing our American aesthetic vision upon our students. This is quite a difficult task because the entire world virtually has been invaded by western culture through rampant globalization and easy access to shared media systems. Yet, there are ways to mitigate some of these factors as long as the teachers practice cultural sensitivity and mindfulness when teaching.

For example, ethnographic interviewing “highlights the nuances of the culture” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 112), thus leaving room for the cultural differences of the subjects to be revealed in a nonbiased and open arena. This is especially important to the shared artwork experience I created with the girls and my role as a participatory observer and contributor to the art-sharing platform. Just as the girls utilized their outward artwork to turn inward, the researcher carried out the same work and contributed to the shared arts platform alongside the girls to keep the dialogue alive and full of momentum. The types of inquiry were two-fold, the primary one being narrative inquiry:

Narrative inquiry requires a great deal of openness and trust between participant and researcher: the inquiry should be a mutual and sincere collaboration, a caring relationship akin to friendship that is established over time for full participation in the storytelling, retelling, and reliving of personal experiences. It demands intense active listening and giving the narrator full voice. But it is collaboration, however, both voices are heard. (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, pp. 122-123)

In contemplating the above quote and how this tied into my research, it became increasingly clear that, in establishing a collaborative feel to the project based on trust bonds and sharing via an artistic medium, narrative inquiry would yield the data that were most needed for this project, a genuine portrayal of what these young women go through in order to attain self-sufficiency and autonomous decision making within adult society. I subsequently utilized all of this information to compile a list of trends in the girls’ behaviors and complete basic profiles of the participants so that I could build a fuller

picture of who each girl was and how their family dynamic (if there was one) interplayed into their lives, along with gauging how they sought out help and advice and from whom.

Through narrative inquiry, where the “researcher explores a story told by a participant and records that story” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 122), I sought out an authentic voice for each girl that increasingly became compelling and original. As the months progressed and they became accustomed to using their devices to record important events, meaningful vignettes, and to somewhat regularly video-journal, a veritable plot line developed for each individual that enhanced the narrative aspect of this study while further informing the interviews and resulting data from this process.

As previously mentioned, the other essential component of my methodology was the Participatory Community Research model, which allowed “strategies that actively involved research participants in the development and implementation of the research process” (Jason et al., 2004, p. 17) and where “shared power between researchers and community participants was an essential element” (p. 10). The participants were essentially in harmony with the goals of the researcher, and the process became one that was coauthored and not solely written from the point of view of the so-called “expert in the field” (Jason et al., 2004). Participatory Research was strongly suited to my goals of engaging further social action and responsibility in identifying a significant topic that had yet to be thoroughly examined, thus giving voice to those who had not had adequate representation in broader society. Here lay the overarching goals of Participatory Community Research, which engages two systems based upon the role of the participants and their initiative to make change that is significant to their circumstances and that may benefit, in the future, those who are experiencing similar conditions.

This line of thought aligned seamlessly with my research paradigm, buttressing my argument that “the passive observer cannot learn anything rational about the inner dynamics and conditions” of certain social systems that are being examined, but “by becoming a member and making observations over a long period, the observer can

succeed.” Remember here that the “role of the research involves the dual aim of theorizing and taking action, with action based on theorizing” (Karlsen & White, 1991, p. 145). This perspective corroborates the intent to create a longstanding art network while partaking fully in the artistic process with my participants. It is through our shared actions and the resilient bonds we build with one another over time that we can initiate change as a group and perhaps contribute to the wellbeing of the next wave of girls that age out of this particular orphanage while adding significant data for orphanages globally.

### **Proactive Solutions and Guiding Principles**

I have learned the value in and importance of “community partnerships,” where the “objectives involve formalizing community partnerships through a Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) or a Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between the institution and the program” (Hayes, 2008, p. 221). These types of partnerships, working with community leaders and advocates as an American-based NGO, are integral to the projects that I conduct with underserved populations in Latin America. I primarily work with orphaned or abandoned female Latina children living within institutionalized care and orphanages; thus, it is imperative to develop “culturally appropriate and culturally sensitive materials and interventions” that are essential in aiding this specific population. Additionally, “the establishment and maintenance of mutually beneficial community-based partnerships between academic centers and the programs that promote health services and health care are vital to the eventual elimination of health disparities” worldwide (p. 222).

We need to consider as a society what hierarchal boundaries occur between men and women, not just in Latin America, but globally. The focus should be upon “improving family relationships” (Obregon & Waisbord, 2012, p. 499), where “health is

also construed as a relational construct within communities” and health is “construed more broadly than as a physical state: being healthy entails having good feelings, being motivated and inspired, having a positive attitude, and nurturing relationships with people” (p. 495). This could mean focusing on how to change certain negative behaviors between spouses and parents where physical or mental abuse may be prevalent due to stressful living conditions, poverty, and repeated narratives of abuse. These cycles of abuse, teenage pregnancies, male abandonment of their families, and then later abandonment of children will continue if progress is not made within these communities via education and connectivity (Obregon & Waisbord, 2012), and orphanages such as the Peruvian Hogar will continue to be overburdened with children who cannot be supported by their own families or who are simply unwanted.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

I audio-recorded a majority of our sessions when I was teaching the video lesson plan, which spanned the course of about ten days. I used a Dictaphone to record all interviews with the girls, nuns, staff, and volunteers. I then transcribed the interviews to better analyze salient themes that emerged. I hoped to gauge a fundamental understanding of what the girls’ needs were throughout our time together and how to support them as much as possible in the transition while promoting them to reach their goals. Each girl’s ambitions differed, whether they were initially going to get a job or going straight to University with the help of the orphanage. They had a tough road ahead of them in terms of the volatility and uncertainty that come with the life of a young female living in Peru with little to no familial support.

Throughout the course of time, I corresponded with the girls and kept both a written and photographic journal recording of their life events. As the project progressed and took the inevitable twists and turns, Instagram and, then later, Facebook became the

most reliable way to communicate and keep track of the girls. The Tumblr page that I initially set up was intended to be a valuable source of information that could create continuity and flow throughout the 16 months, but uploading longer videos onto this digital platform proved to be much more difficult than anticipated. The biggest issue was the Internet service and its reliability. The Hogar had only one spot in a corner where the kids had to gather in order to post their pictures to Instagram and Tumblr. The time it took to download pictures was usually quite long, and uploading videos was virtually impossible. After a few months, we were able to create a stronger and more reliable Internet connection at the Hogar, but it was impossible, due to infrastructure and funding reasons, to establish a connection throughout the entire orphanage.

The participants' photo-journals, videos, my personal journals and fieldwork observations, Skype calls, and the consistent dialogue between myself as the principal researcher and the eight participants and two nuns are what led to the identification of significant themes of sub-indicators within the themes of the collective work generated. The journals and observations served as anecdotal information that provided additional material relevant to the emergent themes.

## **Participants**

The girls who participated in this study were all currently living at the school and in the midst of leaving the year that I began to put the study together in 2013 or were required to leave by December of that year. As previously mentioned, the first two participants were nominated by Mother Alexandrina, and the other six girls were chosen by Rosa and Angie, both of who were eager to contribute and mentor those that needed help or encouragement. Participant number one was Rosa Chumacero. She was 20 years old. She had lived at the orphanage since 2002, and was originally from Cajamarca in southern Peru. She currently attends University and will reside in a structure built on the

Table 1. Data Chart and Procedures

Research Question	Data Source	Data Type	Data Use / Purpose	Data Analysis
<p>PRQ</p> <p>Given that young people likely face many difficulties when leaving their orphanage and due to the significant gap in literature and research on this topic, society knows very little about their experiences, how can an aesthetic video experience make a unique contribution to the ways in which these young adolescents self-reflect at a pivotal time in their lives?</p>	<p>8 subjects (young women currently living at orphanage who are transitioning out at the end of the year) nuns, community employees, volunteers</p> <p>Researcher reflective journal</p>	<p>Interviews, Journals, the photos the young women generated</p> <p>Transcripts from interviews, journal writings, their video diaries interviews of the nuns,</p>	<p>Future plans Daily routines, Experience outside the orphanage</p> <p>Developing working protocols/frame work and resource list for adolescent in transition from orphanage to outside society</p>	<p>Qualitative analysis of the data in order to discover emergent themes related to the experiences of the eight girls during their first year living outside of the orphanage (Thematic)</p>
<p>SRQ #1</p> <p>How can art assist these young women to reflect upon their new experience of preparing to leave and then living outside of the orphanage</p>	<p>8 subjects and their art work, quality /quantity, level of commitment</p>	<p>Interview, video footage, conversations, how much work is outputted in project</p>	<p>For understanding how art can function for these students and provide a supportive network for them</p>	<p>Through Skype, Facebook Instagram and other technological platforms shared with the 8 subjects and nuns, findings based on emergent themes through ongoing conversations and dialogue.</p>

Table 1 (continued)

Research Question	Data Source	Data Type	Data Use / Purpose	Data Analysis
<p>SRQ #2</p> <p>How can art serve as valuable tool assisting these young women to reflect upon their new experiences of living outside orphanage</p>	<p>8 subjects and their photos plus assessing of their commitment to postings and editing their narratives to social media</p>	<p>Interviews, journal entries, blog posts, video post, art work</p>	<p>Assessing the impact of the study Assessing the outcome, how did the subjects fare?</p>	<p>Thematic Analysis of identification of subject indicators. (How themes relates to individual)</p>
<p>SRQ #3</p> <p>What will these young women learn about themselves through activities such as journaling, art making and collaboration?</p>	<p>Samples of subjects art work</p>	<p>Self-reflective journals and video projects</p>	<p>Self-reflective journals and video projects interviews, journaling and follow up conversations and dialogue</p>	<p>Thematic analysis assessing overall outcome and piecing together cohesive narratives for each girl collaboratively and utilizing all platforms from media and art produced to share the overarching experience of the group.</p> <p>Emergent themes create opportunities for ongoing feedback and dialogue</p>



orphanage a few years ago by an American company. The second participant was Angie Guerro, who had lived at the orphanage for many years as well and attends the same local university in Lima Province. She will also live at the orphanage while she attends University.

The third participant was Yovany Tomaylla, who was 20 years old and had lived at the orphanage for 8 years; she attends the same university as Angie and Rosa. The fourth participant was Veronica Milagros Yujra Larico, who was 16 years old and had lived at the orphanage for 4 years. The fifth participant was Maria Lizset Mijahuanca Pinzon, who was 17 years old; she was from Cajamarca and had been at the orphanage for 11 years. The sixth participant was Anahi Pretell Yangali, who was 16 years old and had been at the orphanage for 2 years. The seventh participant was Patricia Liz; she was 16 years old, had lived at the orphanage for 3 years, and was from Hunin. The eighth and last participant was Elena Veramendi; she was 21 years old and had lived at the orphanage for 11 years.

Since there were in actuality 13 girls leaving the orphanage and not just 8, I felt it wisest to let Madre Alexandrina be involved in the selection process while also garnering her acceptance to be a part of the study. This seemed to be the best option since the nuns knew the girls best and therefore were in a better position to pick the participants for this study and be a part of its progression. Mother Ofelia joined the project from the onset as she was already in possession of an Apple device that was given to her prior to the project's start, so she attended all training sessions and learned alongside the girls how to use her device to create short videos, edit photos, and post them on Instagram and Facebook.

### **Lesson Plan Overview**

I created a lesson plan that taught the children how to make video journals and edit photo narratives of their lives to communicate their stories. I began by teaching them how to create a one-minute video on any topic they could imagine or were concerned about and then to develop this idea to the point that they were recording moments of their lives on a regular basis. For example, as they familiarized themselves with their cameras, we discussed different ways in which they could think about creating a cohesive narrative—possessing both flow and personal aesthetic appeal. They were encouraged to explore and discover techniques that worked best in representing their ideas and themes.

The biggest venture to be determined by the students was to learn how to teach them to create their personal storylines using a medium that has the potential to reach many people and present their choices, opinions, ideas, and life's events via a narrative composed of various artistic constructs of their choosing. Participants had to learn video-making concepts, such as timing and framing, and they learned how to utilize and apply the footage they deemed most pertinent to their portrayal of the 16 months in their lives. The students were encouraged to explore and integrate artistic materials and visual effects such as collaging, drawing, sound effects, and other such mediums that would enhance their narratives and grant them greater leeway to experiment in their expressions. The project commenced on August 6, 2014, as it coincided with the moment when the subjects began the process of leaving their school to embark upon what would be one of the most important and challenging phases of their lives.

I established a structure where the girls could share their photo and short video artwork with one another, their peers, and others. While each girl was invited to construct an individual photographic portfolio via a social media-sharing site (such as Instagram), all participants were also invited to share images from their lives via a unified social media platform such as Tumblr while developing their photography, videoing, and

editing skills in the service of expanding their aesthetic perspectives. The opportunity to present both their individual products and ones they created with others allowed them a sense of privacy to decide what images to keep for themselves and what they chose to share on our collaborative platform. Yet, as it turned out, the collaborative site, Tumblr, became the least used social media platform, and Instagram became my most reliable source of data.

### **Art Materials Used for Purposes of This Study**

My organization, Aurelius for the Arts, purchased seven refurbished Samsung Galaxy 3 (2013 model) tablets for the intention of this study. These tablets have wifi capabilities as well as video, photo, and email options. Therefore, the girls learned how to use one operating system, and the programs they needed for editing and posting were all concentrated in one place, which created a sense of ease for the users. In addition, one girl was given an iPod Touch that worked perfectly with this project as iPod Touch devices have the same Internet and downloading capabilities as well as video and photo features as the Samsung devices. They are much like the Samsung Galaxies, but even smaller, lighter, and a bit easier to use.

At first, I trained two assistants by picking two older girls (Angie and Rosa) to aid with organization and training on this project. This system helped me further keep track of the girls and their evolution within the project aims. The older girls truly became the backbone of the data collection objectives while also aiding me in my communications with the younger girls, scheduling Skype sessions, tutorials, and troubleshooting. Thus, the infrastructure was much more sustainable and kept the project fluid and progressive throughout our 16 months together as a group.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of the researcher in this study was multidimensional, yet grounded in the concept of “the seeker role” or “participating as an insider (which) requires the researcher to select from among the roles already available in the setting” (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 60). More directly, the “outsider” role of the researcher is flipped around so that he/she becomes much more privy to the private and emotive feelings of the participants. “Membership is a privileged point of view, and ultimately it is acquired by lived experience” (p. 63). These concepts were the foundation of my objective to “live the experience,” so to speak, in terms of the collaborative arts effort, although the experience of these young women navigating an uncertain world outside of their orphanage was a relatively unique occurrence.

Consequently, I took on alternate roles when conducting my research both on site and off site. When collecting data on site, I was an observer, researcher, and data collector, while also participating in part of the actual product that arose from this study. I thus developed an expansive perspective that garnered results that were intimate and personal in nature. When I was off site, I depended upon my participants to transmit data to me through the various outlets mentioned above, and I enlisted faculty from the school to help keep the girls engaged in the project and set up a consistent schedule where we Skyped semi-regularly and I could communicate as effectively as possible with my participants.

Another detail to consider here was my role in the interviewing process and how my expectations may or may not have affected the data I was collecting during the course of my inquiries. It was important to keep in mind that the way that I questioned the girls may have had some type of effect upon their answers, but according to researchers Bradburn et al. (1979), the interviewer effects are minimal (p. 63) and can be further mitigated according to the length and structure of the interviews. The fact that my

participants could feel nervous in some way because of the intimacy of some of the questions I asked them (more pointedly, about their personal circumstances and about their fears over leaving their home and orphanage) was yet another facet where I had to take particular care in being as sensitive and nonthreatening as possible during the recorded interviews and throughout our time spent together in art-making, informal in-person conversations, and Skype calls.

The translator that I worked with was Ilianov Pablo Carrasco Lopez, who is a professor of English at the local university just outside Lima, which is located approximately one hour from the orphanage. It was incredibly helpful that the translator I recruited was someone the girls already knew, and we all became increasingly comfortable together conversing as a group. He is a professor at the college that many of them will be or are already attending, and he is a fixture at the orphanage, dedicating a great amount of his personal time volunteering and helping the nuns whenever possible with their various needs. Since all of the girls were so familiar with Ilianov and he continuously exhibited such a welcoming and personable energy with them, my interviews, lesson plans, and correspondence translations became that much more dependable and consistent in nature.

Although I was clearly an outsider to this community and a newcomer in the girls' lives, the most important preliminary step for this work was to familiarize myself with the girls' people: their customs, culture, routines, personal histories, and present lives. As the interviewer, participant, observer, researcher, and teacher, I was entrusted to maintain both a sense of intimacy and empathy with my participants, while also attempting to learn as much about their lives and ambitions as possible. My most fervent wish was to empower these young women during our 16 months together and help them achieve greater confidence levels. Most of us were consistent in reminding one another of our long-term goals, which were clearly stated at the beginning of this project; every three months or so, after we would link up in Peru, the girls exhibited much amusement

looking back at moments in their lives and giving further explanation. The building of their stories via photo-art making seemed to have become something of a thrill for many of them (especially Madre Ofelia).

Another example of the impact was when some of the older girls helped the younger girls who were preparing to leave by showing them that positivistic choices existed and that their education could continue in a relatively safe or at least somewhat nonthreatening environment if they prioritized and worked hard at maintaining strong academic standing to retain their scholarships and travel stipends from the university. This was a supremely motivational force for such highly impressionable young women, who all shared very real fears about making their way in the outside world.

The value of my work, first and foremost as a researcher, lay with an ability to set up a comfortable space, so to speak, for the girls to develop trust bonds, not just with myself as the researcher, but also with one another. The initial intent was to imbue the girls with a sense of genuine assurance that I would remain in their lives and guide them as much as possible through our process together. The interviewing, the sharing, and the overall mood of the study remained attuned to their needs specifically. The resulting data from their work became all the more authentic and meaningful where strong ties of camaraderie were emphasized and encouraged. The girls turned out to be the guiding force behind the entire project, and as a result they were keener data collectors and kept the momentum going throughout the 16 months.

### **Personal Bias**

I am a White woman in my 30s from a big city and relatively decent means conducting a study on adolescent girls residing at an institutionalized care home in rural Peru. I speak English and some Spanish, and the girls speak only Spanish and no English. I have been taught art in primarily English-speaking countries and have thus developed a

westernized viewpoint of art education and theory. As much as I have researched and studied cross-cultural educative theory, I still have a certain viewpoint that has been endowed upon me by my culture and upbringing.

I have never taught art professionally, yet I believe wholeheartedly in its importance in the life of children. I came to my research and my project site with this notion firmly in mind, so I needed to be careful how I framed my interview questions and not lead the girls to state something that they had not yet formed concrete ideas about in their lives and education. I come from a country rich in resources and considered by other, less developed countries to be powerful and somewhat intimidating. I may have certain preconceived attitudes about the girls that may very well not be true. Yet given the nature of this research and my manner of flexibility and openness coupled with thorough experience and exposure to the aforementioned issues, I believe that I conducted this study with full integrity and adaptability.

Howard Gardner (1990) speaks about “pervasive cultural bias in the West, nearly all major scholars in the area of human development have concurred on what it means to be a ‘well-developed’ adult” (p. 6). He means that a “well developed adult” is someone who has a firm knowledge base founded primarily upon mathematics and science. Yet, he argues that “artistic competence” is just as strong of a component to one’s education as math and science, whereas “the arts involve emotions, that they induce feelings or mystery or magic, or they have a religious or spiritual dimension ... human artistry is viewed first and foremost as an activity of the mind” (p. 9). Despite the numerous personal, circumstantial, and cultural biases that I bring to this study and research, it is through my research and work with underserved children, most of whom have had very little access to art education, that I wish to further debunk the westernized perspective of downplaying the importance of the arts within a full educational schema.

I also realize my point of view must be founded upon firm principles of child development and art educational pedagogy that is not stemming from an arts advocacy

perspective. It is important to acknowledge that not everyone may share my same stance and that when I designed my interview inquiries and follow-up interviews, which occurred later on in the project, I should not frame my questions and dialogue in such a way that the girls felt obligated to mirror and back up my opinions. This program was designed for them and their needs, and I truly believe students should coauthor their educational lesson plan and feel that they are contributing to the overall framework and structure of their arts curriculum. This was a joint venture, subject to change with circumstances, the feeling of the participants, and the principal researcher's ability to keep things organic in nature and free-flowing. This stance did, in fact, serve the actual research data that emerged in that nothing was forced and events evolved naturally and in harmony with the young participants and nuns.

### **Ethical Concerns**

This research is positioned to further examine the cross-cultural influences that encompass the parameters of children from another culture and language being taught art by foreign teachers who may or may not speak their native language. More specifically, the teachers and teaching artists from my organization, Aurelius for the Arts, mostly hail from English-speaking countries, and thus they utilize, on some level, a westernized art educational perspective in their teaching pedagogies.

The process of employing an artistic medium to tell personal stories is not necessarily a new idea, though this topic of research, uncovering what happens when young girls "age out" of their orphanage, is one that has seldom been addressed in past and current research. The artistic and educational aims converge in one overall schema marrying the idea of artistic vision and execution with the influence of the children's culture and the interplay of the westernized teaching artist's culture upon the students. Themes of self-reflection, accountability, cultural perspective, and the subsequent



authoring of their unique aesthetic vision made up a large part of the data that were analyzed.

### **Personal Experience and Reflection**

The language barrier was one of the largest hurdles I encountered when I initially interviewed my participants and the caretakers of the participants. I was strictly dependent upon my translator to ask my questions in proper form and correctly translate back the responses. This process took much longer than a more normative type interview between researchers and participants who speak the same language. My initial interviews were preliminary, really to gain access and create an atmosphere of comfortable conversing, and I wanted to keep my questioning to a minimum in some respects, not inundating the subjects. It seemed most important to establish an atmosphere of trust and respect; I aspired that my participants and the nuns would ultimately feel good about this project and not intimidated or unsure. Yet, at first, it was very trial and error and slightly experimental, and it took a few days for everyone to overcome their fears of the unknown, technology, and art-making to increase their confidence levels in what they might bring to the shared art work that we were embarking upon as a team.

Mother Alexandrina was incredibly busy with the responsibility of so many children under her care on top of overseeing huge community outreach projects. The fact that she grew up in the orphanage herself and has dedicated her life to running the entire place is a humbling notion. She is a true example of what a success story can be for girls “aging out” of an orphanage (if one is measuring success by a person’s seeming happiness and contentedness). At every interview and tour, she would speak to me about the strain the orphanage was under and the limited access they had for funding. Every week brought its many uncertainties, yet she remained efficient and stoic at all times. She was also incredibly open-minded to a full-on arts curriculum and pointed out numerous

times the benefits to the children, always imploring me during each of my consecutive visits to take on more girls for our project.

This thought leads me to the questions of access and maintaining the role of a strict observer, researcher, and educator. Could my emotional connections to these young women influence the access they gave me to their lives? Their world is one that is incredibly insular, wary of the outside world, wary of what is beyond the walls of their orphanage, and distrustful of the life that lies ahead of them because their future lives will no longer be governed by the rules and order of the nuns and their staff. The girls spoke often of their fears of the outside world during interview times and our moments spent together at the Hogar. Often they would repeat stories they had heard from other girls who had left the orphanage and had not fared so well. They used adjectives such as “tough,” “difficult,” and “really scary” to describe the lives of their older counterparts and their struggles to find work, vocations, and complete their education in a society that is so impoverished and male-dominated. The feeling I got was one of resignation and defeat, yet these notions largely improved for most of the girls as their lives carried on, the exception being the two girls (Patricia and Yovany) who were most affected by the influx of change and life circumstances.

My emotional responses could be quite hard to control, and, in fact, there was one time I was not able to stifle my feelings. It was the last day of interviews, and Anahi was my second to last girl. After my first interview with Mother Alexandrina, she had asked that I take Anahi on for this project because she had lost her mother two years ago in a horrible car accident and her father was out of the picture.

Anahi elicited a particularly emotive response from me (as an interviewer), and it proved somewhat tough to get back under control. I had to stop the audio-recording and go into another room to regain my composure. My participant (the interviewee) was visibly shaken, and I was unsure how to comfort her at that point. We were all just getting to know one another, and I knew I was supposed to maintain a level of distance,

respect, and maturity at all times. I felt the girls needed this attitude to be preserved. They necessitated a steady hand in guiding them during our time together. But when this vulnerability came out, largely due to my complete exhaustion of interviewing so many girls, hearing one sad story after another, and feeling quite helpless, it was tough to immediately revert back to the role of the researcher. The mother/daughter relationship is such a tender one; a sort of kinship actually began to arise in moments where I felt the most vulnerable, and our work together only deepened as time went by as our inhibitions were lessened. Although it took some time to recuperate and finish Anahi's interview, it proved to be a great moment of learning. An ethnographic narrative study does require a strict model for the relationship between the researcher and participants.

The original thought was that we would post photos and videos to our personal Instagram pages and shared Tumblr page and attempt to mirror each other's work. I amended this when I saw that at first it was too difficult for them to post their own work without specific tasks in mind and decided to assign them bimonthly themes. I sporadically followed along themes with them, which helped to prohibit them from mirroring my work and eventually, after they experimented enough on their own, we did not need the themes any longer, and their quests became more individualized as they went in the direction each of their lives took over the course of our 16 months together.

The largest question I ponder in all of this is whether or not I have been successful in my efforts. Throughout the course of the 16 months, I realized that their work far exceeded any of my aspirations; they each discovered their unique voices and articulated their visions quite magnificently with their art and their narratives. The girls that dropped out of the project surprised me most of all. I never expected that the majority of the participants would be able to remain. I tried to be realistic about my expectations and not stress the output of the participants' work; instead, I was more concerned about the thoughtfulness behind it. They knew I did not want random postings with little thought behind them and that this was a journey we were all jointly taking together.

Yet, I discovered that the most striking element of this work was how deeply entrenched the nuns remained in the lives of most of the girls. They arduously followed up with extended family members when possible, they gave clear and loving counseling and guidance whenever needed, and they were accepting of strangers and foreigners who came onto their territory, no matter their race or creed. Although they remain curious about the faith of those that volunteer their time, this has never become a source of contention for them. The number one pillar of their faith is based on love of all of humankind, and this is very clearly exhibited in their caregiver model at the Hogar.

### **Art Making and Video/Photo Journaling**

It follows that there must exist some framework for understanding how young people who are “orphaned” must deal with such impending upheaval ahead of them as they age out of their orphanage and are forced to make decisions that will affect the trajectory of the rest of their lives; clearly this is an area that deserves much more attention. Art making and sharing is certainly a viable way for society to become privy to these children’s everyday stories. An outlet created out of an art lesson plan slanted toward the needs of the girls who are leaving the orphanage was a way for them to learn how to express their inner and outer struggles and lend insight into their life choices via an artistic medium. As this work centered around the concepts of first building a personal aesthetic and then learning how to express such, the study revealed quite a large amount of growth and learning through its course.

This idea of a unique aesthetic perspective became a source or avenue for the participants to communicate part of their story to a broader audience while allowing them the breadth to actively learn and employ a whole new set of skills. Video making is a craft that can be somewhat easily taught. The lesson plan was constructed with the aim of teaching the girls how to live alongside their cameras, and to rely on their small

contraptions to record their experiences, their feelings, and the strides toward their end goals. The videos and pictures then functioned as their journal entries that they would subsequently edit down into short films. I pulled from various resources and lesson ideas to create a custom plan for the girls and arranged for a filmmaker volunteer to help me teach basic filmmaking and editing techniques. I believed that if the girls were taught by a young professional who had made a successful living at making films and is currently working at a prominent and well-known network television station, they would be even more enthusiastic about their venture.

Cameras and editing programs have come a long way in the past two decades in regard to ease of use and “trouble free editing programs” that allow students flexibility and easier access to technological advances (Black & Smith, 2008). This means that as art teachers have become more comfortable with utilizing technology in their classrooms, children have benefited from increased exposure to art forms that may have once been intimidating to some teachers due to their unfamiliar technological foundations and inorganic approach. Yet the aforementioned researchers assert:

Bringing students’ popular and contemporary digital cultures into classrooms will trigger interest, engage learning, relate their digital world to their academic one, and connect students to the learning process. Through the use of digital technologies and by shifting boundaries between popular culture and traditional culture, the emergence of new art forms will create an exciting contemporary classroom culture. (p. 28)

Accordingly, the exploration of video making in a context that allows students to first get comfortable with the video camera and recording small segments that would eventually lead the student toward bigger and greater endeavors was a prodigious start to an increasingly layered and motivating lesson plan.

## Summary

This chapter laid out the framework, setting, and background of the dissertation study. This was a qualitative research design that utilized a mixed methodology approach. The mode of inquiry was ethnographic in nature, relying upon interviews, on-site observations, personal journaling, and photographing in addition to the thematic analysis of the output of each of the eight participants and two nuns. From these data, six key themes emerged concerning the outcomes of each young girl's continuing life at the Hogar and her endeavors outside of the orphanage. The focal points of this study were community building via art making and building of personal aesthetic, community engagement, reflection on self-identity, cross-cultural art education, and shared experience via photo-art narratives and social media. The thematic analysis of data such as the interviews, personal journals and observations, the art, photos, and short videos, along with the dialectic nature of the project, developed themes unique to the individual as well as ones that were unifying among the whole of the group.

## Chapter IV

### CASE STUDIES

#### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the eight participants' plus two of the nuns' backgrounds and histories alongside an overview of the girls' work over the course of the 16 months of the study. Through examination of the photos and video journaling of the participants' work, the six main themes that evolved out of the study were community building via art making, community engagement, reflection on self-identity, the proposed effectiveness of cross-cultural art education, shared experience, and effectiveness of a Participatory Community Research framework for this study. The method I employed to examine each participant's work was primarily that of Participatory Observation, which consisted of immersing myself within their community for long stretches of time, consistent interviews and conversations, personal photo-journaling, note-taking, and finally teasing out what recurring themes I could see emerge within the work of the eight young girls and the two nuns.

#### **Overview**

A great deal of information was gleaned about each girl and how she used her newly formed artistic outlets to portray her life. Through extensive interviews and time spent with the girls, I began to create preliminary histories of each girl so that I could better understand their circumstances, their family lives, and how they came to live at the

Hogar. Especially important to my investigation was their relationship to the nuns that cared for them and their perspective regarding their future trajectories in life. At the start of the study, every girl displayed anxiousness regarding her future life outside the orphanage. The uncertainty regarding “life beyond the walls” of their institutionalized care home was one that was daunting to some and intriguing and exciting to others.

The girls all coped with the changing landscapes of their lives very differently. Two of the participants dropped out of the Hogar (and hence the study), but continued to take pictures and post on Instagram and, later, Facebook. Two others developed extreme health and mental problems, two remained at the orphanage and attended university under extremely difficult circumstances, mostly revolving around transportation and security concerns, and the remaining two did manage to move off-site of the Hogar and launch themselves into a life revolving around their university. The six participants that did make it to college have all maintained variously strong presences at the Hogar, but drawing from observations in my own field studies within a majority of Latin American orphanages, it is a rarity that such a privilege even exists.

In my experience, the fact that the girls had the option to come back to the Hogar is not the case in most of the places that I have worked. The nuns at this particular orphanage maintained an open stance toward every resident, maybe at the cost of future residents. They did not simply put these girls out on the street after they aged out; they continued to offer them assistance in return for a stringent work ethic. The girls who benefitted the most from the Hogar were the ones that worked the hardest and continued the care model forwarded by the resident nuns. Yet, caring for many young children while commuting a long distance to study at a university that ostensibly seemed to be quite demanding academically was a formidable option insomuch that the two girls who remained beholden to the orphanage were under visible strain.

It must be noted that there are a lot of spelling and grammar mistakes on the part of the participants. This may partially be due to their use of Peruvian slang. Every country



has its dialect, and Peru certainly has many, as it is a large country. So the translations that I have provided are the best that I could do, since Peruvian slang is fairly hermetic and unfamiliar to me.

### **Case Study Participant 1: Rosa**

Rosa is 20 years old and has lived at the Hogar for nearly a decade. She was the first girl I met at the Hogar, and she truly possesses the largest presence at the school. Because of the length of time she has been at the Hogar, she seems to be very comfortable in the group living and group care environment, overseeing many children and assisting the nuns in their day-to-day chores, such as cooking, cleaning, bathing the younger children and dressing them, keeping things organized, and helping to run the orphanage as smoothly as possible. She is a remarkable fixture at the Hogar, so much so that I wonder at this point how they will be able to operate once she leaves. When I asked her if there were many volunteers that visited from other countries or that came from the outside communities of Peru, she answered with a very affirmative NO. There had been some Italians there who visited with their priest, and before that, a French organization came to implement a recycling program (which they still use), but other than that, this community is left to largely fend for itself.

Her interview revealed much about the conditions of the scholarship she was awarded to attend the local university, one that ties her to the orphanage indelibly. This is because any of the girls that have good enough grades to receive one of these few and much coveted scholarships must then commit themselves to working long hours at the Hogar. This means taking care of the younger children while also helping with the numerous everyday chores, like cooking, cleaning, and looking after the animals that live close to the dorms of the youngest girls.

Rosa is originally from Cajamarca and came to the orphanage when she was just 12 years old in 2002. In the first interview, she stated that she rarely sees her family, maybe once a year because the journey is far from Lima and costly. She has many other siblings, and thus far it is unclear why she was solely chosen to live at the orphanage and not her other brothers and sisters. It should be noted, though, that from my personal observations over the course of the study, Rosa is very well acclimated to the orphanage and the community that surrounds it.

When I first met her in August 2014, she was preparing for her first year at the university and moving to a part of the Hogar that was farther away from the rest of the dormitories in a building that was built a few years earlier by an American group. The building is composed of a main living area and about ten or fifteen bedrooms with adjoining bathrooms, all made of concrete. It was originally meant to house volunteers, but since volunteers are rare, the nuns have allocated some of the rooms for the girls that are attending the university. Other girls that choose to live somewhere outside the Hogar usually end up having to pay rent or live with friends or relatives. Thus, they have more freedom and are not subject to the rules, curfews, and rituals of the orphanage.

Rosa chose to live her first year at the Hogar for security and financial reasons. Though she exhibits great love for the nuns and the children that are in the orphanage, she also seemed excited in the preliminary interviews to start her college experience and begin to make new personal connections. In her first interview, Rosa spoke of her fear of the outside world, and the difficulties that so many girls face in finding solid work and affordable housing. As daunting as her worries were, she was very clear about her path in life and her goals for her career and ongoing livelihood. When I asked her if she had planned for her future, she stated that she wanted to be a “professional” and go back to the province where she was born because the air was “fresher” and there was a tranquility there that Lima plainly lacks. I observed her to be very diligent about her endeavors to make mature choices and find the life-course that best suits her, but she also misses her

family terribly, and after her studies finish, it seems highly likely that she will return to them.

There was great hope in her case, as she is a responsible individual, forced into maturity by her circumstances and loyalty to the place she grew up in and to the nuns who more or less have taken the place of her mother. She told me in her first interview that the nuns would try their hardest to provide her with anything she needed. She seemed acutely aware of how hard they continuously work and took great pride in showing us around the orphanage. She introduced me and my volunteers to the staff, children, and nuns that comprised this community, while trying her best to make us feel comfortable and adjust to the life there. Her feelings of respect and admiration are sincerely infectious to the other children, and she is key to teaching them values and morals and mentoring them through their stay at the orphanage.

As Rosa was the very first volunteer for my project, since she was a bit older and had such a dynamic rapport with the nuns, children, and young women of the Hogar, I felt that once I trained her on the Samsung devices, she would be able to assist in training the other seven girls and keep up with the assignments while helping the rest of the girls to do the same. Before this project, Rosa had never seen a tablet before or used one. She did not have an email or social media account, so all of those things needed to be set up for her. She assiduously wrote down her codes for the accounts we opened up for her: her Gmail account, Facebook and Instagram, plus the security codes for the shared Tumblr account. She was visibly enthralled with the process of learning about technology and how it could keep us all connected once we left.

In addition to all of this, Rosa had to learn how to use all the features of the Samsung tablets, the settings, the applications, how to use the camera and video recorder and edit material both directly on the tablet, and use the social media sites where she would later learn to post pictures and videos online. Rosa's training on these various platforms went very smoothly. She picked up on things quickly, despite the fact that the

Hogar had just gotten wireless Internet installed in one small corner of a building a few months prior. This corner is where we all had to gather to work on the devices and post material to the online arenas. Due to the logistics of the orphanage and the wiring constraints, it proved impossible to have wireless Internet anywhere else in the school. This is a very important point to this project, because it has become quite limiting to the girls. The smallness of the space and the relative busyness of it made it difficult for the girls to have full privacy or a clear space to think when they were online.

As this was where all of the subsequent Skype calls took place, scheduling the calls and getting the girls together alongside the interpreter was no easy feat. If it were not for participants like Rosa, who kept the momentum and enthusiasm for this project going, it could have lost traction fast. It took a lot of energy and forethought to make it over to the space a few times a week and work on this project on a routine basis. Rosa was the first to see the value and advantages of participating in this project and staying the course over a lengthy period of time.

When I told her, “We are building a narrative that over 16 months will tell a complete story and that the girls can one day look back at and really see how much they have changed over the years,” she appeared to be greatly moved by the prospect of creating this chronicle together and collectively sharing our stories over this period of time. In some ways, this project may have given her something to look forward to, a break in a somewhat monotonous routine, and a way to express herself and share her story, not just with me, but also with the other girls in the project. In fact, the very first thing Rosa pointed out in her second interview was how incredibly close she had become to the other girls in the project. They had spent so much time together helping one another with their pictures and posts and supporting one another in their endeavors. She told me that it was one of the best aspects of this work, creating art alongside her peers and getting to know them on a more intimate level through their pictures and videos.

The original few pictures that Rosa took were experimental in nature. The very first one is a close-up face shot, expressionless, peering into the camera (Figure 1).



Figure 1. A self-portrait Instagram photo by Rosa

The next four or five photos are of volunteers and some of her peers. Rosa was clearly trying to get to know how to use the camera and determine her subject matter, but seemed very confused about what to take pictures of and how to construct them into a cohesive storyline. The fourth picture she posted was a group shot, Madre Alexandrina is in the far back surrounded by members of the community, and some of the girls and children from the orphanage are holding garbage bags full of what look like donations and food (Figure 2). The backdrop is a large brick building, which is the community center, previously described in Chapter III.



Figure 2. An Instagram photo by Rosa

Before I left the first time, I assigned the participants a theme with the instruction that I would appoint a new subject every two weeks or so via Skype or email. Rosa seemed to be the most relieved out of all of the girls when I told them about the themes. She is someone who is eager to please, wanting to do this “assignment” in the “right” way. It was difficult to explain to her and the others that there was no correct way to participate. I wanted to discourage them from falling into the basic traps of taking photos like “selfies,” sexy shots, and/or generally thoughtless motifs. The first week I worked with the girls, I showed them many different examples of photography and played a short video of young people and children’s video art and narratives. My highest aim was for Rosa and the others to really plan things out for themselves about what subjects they wished to portray in any given instance. The way in which they went about organizing their photos and what they decided to finally post on their Instagram accounts was just as important as practicing and experimenting with their devices. Of course, the girls could take as many photos as they wanted to, but the most important element lay in their choice of what they posted, and what photo they decided best represented themselves and their captured moment.

The first theme I assigned was nature, primarily since nature was all around the Hogar in various forms. I wanted to keep the themes vague so that the girls could take their time and show me what nature meant to them, how they would portray it, and what their art would say about the nature that they lived within and their surrounding home environment. Rosa took a picture of a multi-colored flower (Figure 3), which was a



Figure 3. An Instagram photo by Rosa.  
 “Una hermosa rosa del hogar de niñas.”

simple way to portray something she found beautiful and what she appreciated as part of her everyday environment. (The translation here is literally *a beautiful rose of the girl’s school*.) As time progressed, one can see clear evolution in her aesthetic, as she branched out from the themes I would routinely assign and created her own life chronicle, which is thoughtful, expansive, and shows us a girl that is quite content in her life. Rosa embodies joy in her everyday activities, helping children with homework, having fun at the beach with friends etc. (Figures 4, 5, and 6). Figure 4 reads: “Enseñándole su tarea a Flor De Maria” or “helping Flor De Maria with homework.” Figure 6 reads: “Mis Compañeros” or “partners” in English.



Figure 4. An Instagram photo by Rosa.  
“Enseñándole su tarea a FLOR DE MARIA”



Figure 5. An Instagram photo by Rosa





Figure 6. An Instagram photo by Rosa.  
“Mis compañeros”

My next visit with Rosa in person was about eight months later when I came to Lima for five days. She had already started at the university and seemed to be doing well there and enjoying her studies. One picture she took shows her and her friends at the University with the caption “Con mis compañeros de la universidad” (Figure 7), which translates as “With my friends at the university.”

This picture was taken about 33 weeks ago. She had been living for months now in the building built by the Americans, working hard at the Hogar and at her studies. She seemed to be particularly worried about her time management skills at this point. Her days were all long with very little leisure time. Her commute to and from school was also a major issue, as it was long and oftentimes quite dangerous. The next school year, it had been decided that the nuns would rent her and a group of four or five other girls an apartment to stay in that was close to the university.



Figure 7. An Instagram photo by Rosa.  
 “Con mis compañeros de la universidad”

As previously stated, the terms of her scholarship were that she would work at the orphanage as often as needed, and this had become one of her biggest concerns. The Hogar is tremendously understaffed and needs quite a bit of help with the managing of daily chores from the older girls. It helps tremendously not to have to pay for outside help and to place conditions upon each girl’s scholarship. At the same time, the girls’ time is heavily impinged upon with chores and duties. They are often up late studying for hours and doing homework to stay current in their class requirements. Although Rosa is not much of a complainer, during her second interview, one could clearly see the consternation she exhibited over how much was expected of her. Rosa’s first priority was not to herself, but her devotion to her school and her desire to make the nuns and her parents proud. In fact, during the first interview, when I asked her what inspired and motivated her the most, she answered, “my family.” Yet, when I asked if she had seen any family members in recent months, she stated that she really only saw her family “once a year,” because of how far they lived from the Hogar and the costliness of the

travels. Although she attempted to hide her sadness in the interview, her uneasiness in answering that question was acutely apparent.

After my second visit, Rosa really started to home in on the culture of her country in her pictures with very little prompting from me. She opened her world up a bit in her photographic journal, and the progression in her subject matter and styling of subjects and themes is quite striking. Figure 8 shows a small group of women dancing in full costume with a simple caption that reads “Lindas” or, “Pretty.”



Figure 8. An Instagram photo by Rosa. “Lindas.”

It is truly a well-constructed photo that portrays a feeling, a moment of beauty from her culture, and her clear appreciation for their performance, skills, and attire. Two more photos (Figures 9 and 10) show Rosa dressed up in a dance costume with her dance troupe. This clearly must be a passion of hers and a hobby she truly enjoys. She captions: “Las peques con La Hermana Luisa,” which is sort of Peruvian slang Spanish meaning “young boys with Sister Luisa.” Figure 10 reads: “Nuestro último día de danza” or “our last day of dance.”



Figure 9. An Instagram photo by Rosa.  
“Las peques con la hermana Luisa”



Figure 10. An Instagram photo by Rosa.  
“Nuestro último día de danza”

As of now, Rosa currently still lives at the orphanage and works there to pay for her room and board. She attends the university regularly and is getting good grades. As the years have gone by, her postings on Instagram and now Facebook have become much more frequent. They show a girl who is thriving in her life at school and comfortable with her familiar routines at the Hogar. Her schedule is one that most would find grueling. She has very little downtime and must keep up with her studies, as it is essential that she maintain good academic standing in order to keep her scholarship in place and continue her life's course.

### **Case Study Participant 2: Angie**

I met Angie on the second day I was at the Hogar. She was the first girl the nuns recommended I meet with for my project. She is 18 years old and is a demure, intelligent, and hard-working girl. Her manners are truly impeccable, she is incredibly polite and cheerful, and she exhibits a true sense of self. Additionally, she seems to have great confidence in her future career path, which intertwines with her current multifaceted role at the orphanage. Like Rosa, she is a pillar of this community and works in tandem with her and the nuns to care for the girls and run the Hogar. She is extremely religious and belongs to a Catholic group called Communion and Liberation at her university, which she says gives her great support and is a main source for her to meet new friends.

Angie was about 9 or 10 years old when she first came to the Hogar. Her mother is a single parent of two girls (Angie has a younger sister who is also at the Hogar), and Angie has not seen her father since she was 8 years old. In fact, it seemed at first that she knew very little about him, except that he lives in northern Peru and most likely has other children. Her mother works as a full-time housekeeper in the city of Lima and lives in very impoverished conditions 30 minutes from the Hogar. She dropped Angie and her younger sister off at the Hogar, because she could not financially provide for them and

she has always had to work very long hours in the city. Angie stated that before living at the orphanage, she had lived with various relatives, but none of them had the ability to provide for her and her sister, so her mother had to make the best possible decision for her children's well-being.

Angie maintains a very close relationship with her mother, who visits the Hogar every Sunday, which is most likely her only day off. In Angie's second interview, she stated that she wished to eventually live with her mother at some point and take a job as a part-time assistant. Yet, her mother's living conditions are very harsh; she lives in kind of shantytown or *favela*, where houses are crammed together in long rows up and down a large mountainous terrain. The pathways between the houses are so narrow that no car or taxi can make it to the top. There are special two-wheeled shantytown "taxis" that take small change, and they are the only vehicles that can navigate these vast and labyrinthine areas. There are micro-villages with essentially thousands of families living in very makeshift structures that routinely do not hold up to extreme weather conditions. There is usually just a bare floor without water or electricity in most of the houses, though some households manage to somehow splice electricity into their dwellings illegally.

The laws of these villages aren't very cohesive and seem chaotic. The fact that a person can lay claim to land once they build a house on it in the outer provinces and townships of Lima is somewhat bewildering. The people govern themselves, and though their conditions may seem tumultuous to an outsider, there is an organization to it, implemented by the community, and with what looks to be very little interference by the police. The police presence is largely unfelt in these areas. It is almost as if the city of Lima proper exists with its own infrastructure and without a thought to the existence of the outlying impoverished communities.

When I first interviewed Angie, she spoke to me about her goals of studying accounting and forming a firm or business with other accounting students. Angie had "graduated" from the Hogar two years prior, and has been studying at the university for

her degree since then, but she seems eager to move out with some of the other girls into a shared space closer to the college. This will be the same apartment that Rosa and a few of the other girls will reside in, which will be paid for by the nuns. Yet, her work at the Hogar seems more essential now more than ever, as they are extremely short-staffed and need the older girls around as much as possible. The problems of slow Internet, time management, and keeping up with homework assignments are Angie's biggest gripes, but she seemed quite committed to the project. So far she has posted over 118 pictures. She tends to post on Instagram weekly, and her pictures and themes are usually very well thought out and organized. Sometimes she includes small descriptions underneath her photos.

Angie was given an iPhone Touch by a volunteer from New York about four months prior to our first meeting, so she was already fairly adept at handling a device that could perform multiple functions. She already knew how to take pictures and record videos. The reason she was given the iPhone Touch was so that she could take pictures for the abovementioned volunteer, help with his website, as well as help him keep in touch with the girls when he was in New York. Since Angie was already set up on her device with an email account, I only had to train her on Instagram and Tumblr. She was able to learn very quickly and was a big help in training the younger girls who were later chosen to participate in this project.

Angie's very first posted picture was of her and my translator (Figure 11). This picture is an experiment, like many of the first few where she could learn to play with settings and editing techniques while also learning how to use the Internet with the actual Instagram and Tumblr applications. Like Rosa, she was relieved that I assigned themes to work from, because otherwise her direction was a bit off and she needed to know what to focus her vision upon. It was only after I had assigned the girls their very first theme, which was nature, that one can see that Angie really contemplated how she wished to depict nature in her environment. Note here the figure of the child holding what appears"



Figure 11. An Instagram photo by Angie.  
“Yo y el profesor.”

to be an Elmo doll (Figure 12). She wrote: “Los pinos del hogar y la dulce,” another type of slang meaning that the girls of the Hogar are sweet.



Figure 12. An Instagram photo by Angie.  
“Los pinos del hogar y la dulce.”



The little girl is standing outside of a main building where the nuns live, surrounded by the lush greenery found sparingly throughout the grounds of the Hogar. Angie then posts a picture of a drawing that she made, with the description in Spanish saying “Mi obra de arte! Tema: La Naturaleza,” which translates as, “My work of art: Theme: Nature” (Figure 13). It looks to be a portrait, maybe a self-portrait, with her face partially covered by a wild bunch of hair interlaced with butterflies, flora, and leaves. It is very well executed and advanced.



Figure 13. An Instagram photo by Angie.  
“Mi obra de arte! Tema: La naturaleza.”

There are a few pictures of Angie painting (Figures 14, 15, and 16).



Figure 14. An Instagram photo by Angie. "Una de las cosas que me gusta mucho es pintar, hoy por ejemplo he encontrado una idea para una pintura y creo que la comenzaré a."



Figure 15. An Instagram photo by Angie.  
"Pintura terminada!"



Figure 16. An Instagram photo by Angie.  
 “Ya estoy terminado la nueva idea de arte de la que les hablé, bendiciones para todos!”

Angie clearly seems to enjoy art very much, and though the Hogar has no official art classes offered to the children per se, they do provide some limited supplies and access to space to practice art within. Figure 14 reads: “Una de las cosas que me gusta mucho es pintar, hoy por ejemplo he encontrado una idea para una pintura y creo que la con comenzaré la,” which translates to: “One of the things I like to do is paint, today for example, I found an idea for a painting and I think will start it.” Figure 16 is labeled, “Ya estoy terminado la nueva idea de arte de la que les hablé bendiciones para todos” or “Finishing a new idea in art, God bless you all.”

The most striking element of Angie’s photographic journal is her discernable love for young children and babies and her devotion to her religion and her university groups. She is clearly showing her viewers that she enjoys her activities; she enjoys being with the younger children and takes the role of the caregiver very seriously. Angie is one of the most religious of her group, which is very clearly demonstrated in her photographic

journals. Her “family” is a large one, full of love, companionship, and support (Figures 17 and 18).



Figure 17. An Instagram photo by Angie.  
“Mis amigos y amigas del movimiento communion y liberación – universidad.”



Figure 18. An Instagram photo by Angie.  
“Manos generosas que trabajan por amor a las niñas siguiendo las obras de nuestra.”

Figure 18 above was taken approximately 11 weeks ago, and it could reasonably stand as her family portrait. It is a photo with austere elements in the background, but it manages to feel light as well. It seems to be a group function in honor of someone, although it is unclear who that person is exactly. It is a gathering comprised of mostly women; there are only a few men in the entire photo. Mother Ofelia and Mother Alexandrina, the two main functionaries of the orphanage, are toward the back in full habit, and a large crucifix hangs above the group. They are clearly somewhere within the Hogar, but it is hard to say what room exactly and why these particular people were chosen for this very beautiful photo. Nevertheless, I find this piece to be the clearest representation of what family means to Angie.

There are many more short videos and other items that Angie posts, which include all of the children, especially the younger ones and their antics. One of her most striking pictures is one she took of her group in action, Communion and Liberation (Figure 19), taken about 17 weeks ago. The caption reads, “Participando en la marcha por la Vida.” which means, “Participating in the March for Life,” an obvious reference to her very Catholic upbringing and pro-life stance.



Figure 19. An Instagram photo by Angie.  
“Participando en la marcha por la vida.”

One can only assume this is a Pro-Life March, probably very common in a Latin country with strict Catholic values. Since it is highly unlikely they teach any type of sex education in communities such as these, girls like Angie tend to cling to their religious values. It brings them comfort, because it organizes the chaos around them; therefore, they are unlikely to use birth control in their interpersonal relationships. As far as I know, Angie does not have a boyfriend, as she hardly has time for herself, much less a relationship. She does seem prudent enough to be safe in her interpersonal dealings, but again, it is a hard cycle to break, one of early pregnancies and poverty. The nuns are wise enough to know that the only way to ease such circumstances is through education and maintaining a high level of morals.

Angie's pictures from the last few months have mostly been at the Hogar. When I last saw her about two months ago, she told me that she had been robbed at gunpoint on the bus. The trip from the Hogar to the university is mostly unsafe, due to the hours she must travel. Her stop is the last one to Puente Piedra, so she is usually one of the few remaining people on the bus late at night on a weekly basis. She was texting on her small phone (given to her by her mother) a few months ago, when a passenger who had a gun accosted her suddenly. He took her phone and everything that was in her backpack. Fortunately, she did not have much on her and she had left her tablet at the Hogar, so the only thing taken of real value was the phone, but she was very shaken by the experience and she seemed all the more nervous about bringing her device with her to the university. This is probably the biggest reason her last few photos have been mostly of the orphanage, activities there, and the kids.

Angie is one of the girls that will be moving out of the orphanage in the next few months to begin her stay at the apartment near the university. She seems very happy about this endeavor, but it is yet unclear about how she will divide her time between her duties toward the nuns, children, and her studies. As she also hopes to get a part-time job and spend more time with her mother, one can see that she is supremely ambitious, yet

realistic about much she can truly manage. She considers Sunday her only real “day off,” although Sunday is a day like any other day with the young children still needing round-the-clock care, a church Mass and rituals to attend to, plus a large community meal to prepare and clean up after. For her to describe such a full day as a “day off” is quite humbling to hear. Her lack of downtime does not seem to have impacted her optimistic outlook and her appreciation for what her community has given to her and her sister.

### **Case Study Participant 3: Yovany**

Yovany Tomaylla is currently 20 years old and has been at the Hogar for eight years. She was recommended for this project by two of the head nuns because they considered her mature and responsible, but somewhat shy. When they approached me about her participation, they expressed interest in the collaborative element to this work. They indicated that this might help her expand her interests and develop stronger peer relations. Yovany is very soft-spoken and acted quite nervous in the interviews and around the other girls. She seems unsure of herself and looks much younger than 20 years old. One can see by the way she conducts herself that she has some self-esteem issues. She is not necessarily a leader in her interactions, and she seems to need quite a bit of encouragement. In reviewing her interview video recordings, she was certainly timid and unsure in her responses, but she displayed strong enthusiasm to try something new and different.

Yovany is from a southern province outside of Lima called Ayachuco. Her father was an alcoholic and died when she was quite young; thus, her mother was left alone to support Yovany and her younger brother with very little means. Ultimately, both brother and sister were placed in an orphanage early on in their lives, and both finished elementary school there. They were forcibly separated eight years ago when they were both sent to different orphanages. Her brother is currently finishing up high school in

Lima, and Yovany finished at the Hogar last year. They take turns every year visiting their mother because the journey to see her is long and costly.

When I asked Yovany if she felt close to her mother, she seemed slightly unnerved by the question and she answered that she did not see her mother enough to really be close to her. Her responsibilities of work and school, plus the practicalities of travel, kept her from developing a very strong mother/daughter bond. She made it extremely clear during my talks with her and her recorded interviews that her family was at the Hogar and the nuns were the closest thing to resembling a motherly figures. Considering the amount of years at the orphanage and time spent in the care of the nuns, this attitude makes sense. She really did not seem to want to talk about her mother or any of her other family relations; although she expressed great love for her brother, I am guessing they also see very little of one another.

Yovany earned a scholarship through the same university as Rosa and Angie. She is studying administration work and plans to move from the Hogar this year into an apartment shared with some of the other girls. She wants to stay in Lima and work as a secretary or at a similar job, but she seems a bit daunted by her future career path and especially the idea of living apart from the nuns. Like most of the other girls, she is intimidated by the outside world and what lies ahead of her. She speaks about her fear of what the future might bring and where her choices may lead her, as she relies heavily upon the support, love, and validation from the nuns. When I asked her what most inspired and motivated her, she seemed very confused by this question. She completely clammed up in the interview and showed obvious discomfort in finding an answer that would be considered acceptable (by me, her, or someone else in particular, I was not quite sure).

The problem is that not only does she lack self-assurance, but also the greatest portion of her life thus far has been directed by the nuns and their strict Catholic values, so her fear of giving a “wrong” answer when I ask her to describe certain aspects of her



life was very apparent. After a few minutes of contemplating my initial inquiry, she finally replied that she liked listening to music and reading, but the vagueness of this answer was disappointing. Yovany was harder to get to know than the first two girls, and a little more closed off and guarded. This certainly seemed reasonable in her case, as her family is broken up, all living in different places, and she has no resources or family members to call upon. Her dependence upon the orphanage and its resources is not at all surprising; however, what is most jarring is the fact that there are so many girls just like her, most of whom do not receive the care and attention she has received from the Hogar. Her chance to garner an education and head onto a career path is one of pure fortune in this community; she has somehow been able to climb out of the mire and make something much better for herself. Although she is more protective of her internal feelings and thoughts, she was indeed very reachable and excited by our project's work.

During my second interview with Yovany (about seven months after the first), she seemed noticeably content with how things were going in her life and less nervous. The interview went smoother, and her demeanor was quite a bit more relaxed. She told me that she was responsible for helping the older kids at the orphanage (ages 15 to 19) with their homework and mentoring them in their activities. She preferred to work with the older kids because she stated that she felt more "comfortable" with them. Yovany has three years left at the university at this time and hopes to move out with the other girls this year and build her résumé in administration. When I asked her how she felt about the project thus far, she spoke about how much closer she felt to the other girls, specifically Rosa and Angie. She especially enjoyed the fact that they always remembered to bring their devices out to special events like religious fiestas, birthdays, and other such occasions. She loved being able to share such a "beautiful experience" with her friends with whom she had forged closer and more intimate relationships.

Thus far, Yovany has posted 49 pictures, not so many compared to some of the other girls in the project. Her first post (Figure 20) was a semi-candid shot of one of the

first Italian-American volunteers that began work at the Hogar. His name is Diego, and her caption reads: “Hola es un bonita día,” which in English means: “Hi, it is a beautiful day.”



Figure 20. An Instagram photo by Yovany.  
“Hola es un bonita día.”

Diego has been my first point of contact at the orphanage from the beginning. All of the children and young women and nuns have a deep respect for him, as he has raised a great deal of money and awareness for this small community. The picture is a trial run, of course, and the next few that she takes play on the very first theme that I assigned, which was nature (Figures 21, 22, and 23).



Figure 21. An Instagram photo by Yovany.  
“Hermoso jardín del hogar del grupo de santa rosa!”



Figure 22. An Instagram photo by Yovany.  
“Linda naturaleza con sanfrancisco!”



Figure 23. An Instagram photo by Yovany.  
 “Linda naturaleza!”

A natural mushroom surrounded by greenery, a painted mural of a saint hidden behind leafy ferns with the caption reading, “Linda naturaleza con sanfrancisco,” which translates into “Pretty nature with Saint Francis.” Her fifth picture is of Mother Mary in some sort of clear plastic box-like casing, atop an orange pumpkin-like figure. It is a peculiar scenario, and she simply writes, “La Virgen Maria en medio de la naturaleza!” which translates as “The Virgin Mary in the middle of nature” (Figure 24).



Figure 24. An Instagram photo by Yovany.  
 “La virgen maria en medio de la naturaleza!”

All of Yovany's nature-themed photos are taken at the Hogar. It is only after the 16th picture (Figure 25) that Yovany shows us an extraordinary important part of her life, her aunt, who is a nun as well. She is described as her hero and greatest inspiration (note caption for Figure 25 as reading, "Mi tia es la persona que me aconseja, me guia la cosidero mi heroina!!"). Yovany posted this picture and a few others in response to a theme I assigned asking the girls to show me who their "heroes" or "heroines" are, who motivated them in their lives and offered them guidance in time of need. In Figure 26, she explains that "her aunt is the one who advises her". Figure 26 shows Yovany taking a "selfie" with her aunt. (The caption reads, "Un selfie con la Hermana Georgina," or "A selfie with Sister Georgina.")



Figure 25. An Instagram photo by Yovany.  
"Mi tia es la persona que me aconseja, me guia la cosidero mi heroina!"



Figure 26. An Instagram photo by Yovany.  
 “Un selfie con la hermana Georgina...”

It is interesting to note here that Yovany’s hero is also an actual nun. As previously noted, she seems closer and more comfortable with the nuns than with her peers in many ways.

Although Yovany is also making friends at her college, Figure 27 shows her with a group of friends outside of her university with the caption reading, “Mis amigos de la ucss!” or “My friends from the UCSS.”



Figure 27. An Instagram photo by Yovany.  
 “Mis amigos de la ucss!”

It has been nearly a year that we have all been working on this, and sometimes momentum can be lost and must be regained during face-to-face interviewing and more direct interaction. Her 45th post is a picture of three of her friends; one girl is on a Toshiba laptop, staring intently at the screen. She is shrouded by two friends who seem much less serious and are clearly enjoying the moment (Figure 28). The caption reads, “Mis patas o amigos los km.” This is a phrase that seems to have some Peruvian slang in it (“patas” meaning feet which may correlate to how much time it takes to get to her “amigos” or “friends” as she is using Peruvian slang).



Figure 28. An Instagram photo by Yovany.  
“Mis patas o amigos los km.”

Yovany’s last three posts are pictures of herself in the compound of the orphanage where she had been living. Figure 29 shows her looking happy, with the caption reading, “Me di cuenta al fin que ya creci y soy toda una senorita xd.” She is saying that she realized that she grew up finally; she is now a “woman.”



Figure 29. An Instagram photo by Yovany.  
“Me di cuenta al fin que ya crecí y soy toda una seniorita xd.”

Figure 30 caption reads, “Mis últimos días en el hogar!!” or “My last days at the orphanage!” These pictures were posted approximately two weeks ago, almost one year from the date we began this project together.



Figure 30. An Instagram photo by Yovany.  
“Mis últimos días en el hogar!”



Yovany attempted to leave the Hogar about a year after she started at the university and worked at a call center near her school. She secured an apartment for herself and managed to live some time on her own, but eventually she lost the job and had to move back to the Hogar. She has suffered greatly from stress and health problems because she finds it so difficult to be in the outside world with very little money, resources, and familial support. She is currently back at the Hogar, but she has expressed unhappiness about her living situation on more than a few occasions and seems most frustrated by her inability to adjust to university life and adult responsibilities.

For the most part, Yovany is much more introverted than the other girls are, and she is extremely sensitive to her circumstances and uncertainty of her future. Her posts are increasingly infrequent, and much of her later contact with me has been sifted through email from the translator and main facilitator of this project, Ilianov. It is hard to predict the life course of any of these young women, but Yovany is one that seems to be experiencing the most discontent. Although the project may have initially brought her closer to the girls with whom she participated, ultimately her goal was to move on from this community and set up a life outside of her circumstances. Instead, she has found herself in a sort of holding pattern where she cannot find the means, job, support, and resources she needs to move away from the Hogar and sustain a life different from the one she has been leading.

#### **Case Study Participant 4: Patricia**

Patricia was 16 years old at the start of the project, one year ago. Her family is originally from an outside province called Hunin, but now they reside in Lima, not far from the orphanage. Patricia has one sister at the orphanage that is two years younger (14 years old), and they were both placed there because of her parents' continuous economic problems. As I viewed Patricia's first interview footage and went over the

transcript, I could see that my questions were somewhat daunting to her. She answered each one calmly, but usually with one or two unexpressive words and not much elaboration. It was difficult to get a thorough read on her. She seemed intelligent and sweet-tempered, but maybe not so motivated. It was a feeling I had when I first started spending time with her and that crystallized further when viewing the recorded footage of her during interviews and the preliminary teachings on the devices.

For example, when I asked Patricia what her passion was and what motivated her, she seemed truly stumped by the question. She looked as though she wanted the answer to be supplied to her in some manner. She finally answered that it was her “parents” that most inspired and motivated her, but failed to give any real reason why, especially in light of her previous answer to a question I posed about how close she felt to her parents. On that subject, she responded, “I am close to my parents only when they visit me,” to which she added, “which is once a month” and always “on a Sunday.”

Another peculiarity was her description of her feelings about the project we were doing together. I asked how she felt about the nature of the work we were to commence together and her thoughts about using artistic means to express herself and share part of her life’s trajectory. She rather flatly stated that she felt “protective,” but when I pressed her on this remark and asked to clarify her meaning, she again failed to give an answer. It was difficult to understand what she was feeling protective of and why. She simply replied that she was excited to learn more and gain from the experience. Again, it was hard to ascertain whether or not she was trying to please either the translator, who has more of a direct relationship to the Hogar, or myself, the actual researcher/interviewer. The language difference, of course, was an issue; ostensibly, there were many factors at play in this scenario that could and would affect her behavior and answers.

When I asked her what she wanted to do in her future, Patricia affirmed that she wanted to study architecture at the university, although she followed this up by saying that she wanted to move back to Hunin, where she was from, which she described as

basically being “a large village in the jungle.” When I asked her how she would go about making a career out of architecture in Hunin, she again seemed confused about how to answer the question, as if she could not work out what it was exactly that was being asked of her. She simply appeared very uncertain about what life/career/educative course would best suit her both presently and later on in life.

It is clear that this group of young girls has had little guidance in the career paths they choose or the reasoning behind such choices. I suppose Patricia just did not seem as grounded, compared to some of the other girls. Either she was suffering because of her family’s internal marital and money problems, or she was not the best candidate for a group living care model. Patricia is a sensitive girl; she had taken on a great deal of her family’s problems and manifested them into an extreme physical reaction. She departed from the school suddenly and under peculiar circumstances. Her health started rapidly declining due a to a number of reasons, such as domestic instability in her family home, her want and need to be closer to her parents, and her inability to have solid control over her circumstances. She quickly began to lose weight and was later diagnosed with severe anorexia. At the height of her problems, she weighed less than sixty pounds and is being treated at a hospital that specializes in this type of disorder. Her monthly hospital bill is about \$1,200, and she is currently being sponsored by an American family for this cost.

I did get to spend some time with her during the second round of interviews right before she went into treatment. Patricia was noticeably weak, and she looked as though she had lost more than 40 pounds in the months since I had seen her, which was an inordinate amount of weight for a girl her age and size. It was hard for her to articulate her thoughts about her condition and the reasons for her steep decline. She seemed extraordinarily touched by the struggles of her parents and their strenuous domestic circumstances. They all live in a shared room rented from another family while Patricia’s younger sister, who is 14, remains at the orphanage. Although she was awarded an academic scholarship, Patricia’s health at this point is so precarious that it precludes her

from attending the university with the other girls. She explicitly stated that she did not want to live with the other girls in a shared apartment paid for by the nuns near the university, because her parents needed her to be close to them at this time.

Her plan seemed to revolve around selling fruit under a highway bridge close to the home her family shares. Students are the main buyers of street food like this, and it is common to see sellers of all sorts of food and other wares on the busy highways and intersections of Lima and its outer provinces. Patricia did not seem confident in the idea that this may make her family money and expressed concern that her mother had eye problems, which makes the task all the more difficult while her father works from 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. every day as a driver of a small truck. This is just one example of extreme circumstances where there are little opportunities for families to make a viable living. Although she expressed that she wanted to study architecture at the Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola where she earned her scholarship, she also indicated that she felt inclined to give her scholarship money to her parents. This certainly did not bode well for her academic future, and although her parents have denied such things to the Hogar and nuns, no one really knows the real truth of this family dynamic.

When I interviewed Mother Alexandrina about Patricia's health, she expressed extreme consternation over what to do for her exactly. It seems that the problems of the nuns are many and that they have little support to keep every single girl mentally and physically content. There will always be someone who suffers greatly under the group care model. Whether Patricia is unable to cope with the group dynamic or her home life is causing her so much stress remains very unclear at the moment. For now, the hope is to get her healthy enough to eventually attend the university and live with her peers in an apartment close to the campus that will be rented and paid for partially through their scholarship money and partially from the funds of the orphanage. In her second interview, Mother Alexandrina stated:

I was very worried because Patricia's parents are in such conflict and that is why she couldn't study at the Amazon, or in the Amazon. She was too worried about her parents. But the sister is fine, Patricia is very smart and very intelligent but her sister is more effective, not so intelligent but more realistic, she understands the problems of her parents but she is going on with her life. When I was in the jungle many years ago, Patricia's grandfather told me to help them with Patricia for her education because her parents were having problems there. They moved to Lima a few years ago and now the parents have a better relationship and now they are both here to be closer to their daughters and her father works as a truck driver, driving from market to market with a truck. Now Patricia is very concerned about the future because she is about to finish school and now that she has the scholarship she seems optimistic but she is very bad in her health.

In terms of Patricia's postings, during the second round of interviews, she informed me that she had forgotten all of her passwords and that she had no access to wifi. There is very little public wifi available in Lima, especially in the area where she was living with her parents. She did take a few pictures at the hotel where I was interviewing her, but they were the last few that she ever posted (which was about 22 weeks ago). Since the start of the project, Patricia has posted a total of 159 photos over the past year, and that has been quite an impressive accomplishment considering the amount of distress she has been through in that year's timeframe. It was just after she left the orphanage that she stopped posting altogether due to the above-cited reasons.

Her first photo (Figure 31) is one that she took of a project volunteer teaching English. A few photos later, she posted pictures of herself with a friend in front of a waterfall with the caption reading, "Paseando por la catarata bayos.....que lindo" (Figure 32), which roughly translates into, "Walking through the waterfalls, how pretty."



Figure 31. An Instagram photo by Patricia.  
“Speaking English with Lorena.”



Figure 32. An Instagram photo by Patricia.  
“Paseando por la catarata bayos...que lindo.”

One very notable picture, which she took early on, is Figure 33, which seems to be some villagers holding what looks like bags of candy. It looks as though there are volunteers of some sort standing behind the group shot, though it is hard to say. The picture depicts extreme poverty outside the orphanage, and the children here look starkly different from the children living at the Hogar. Most of them are shoeless and look uncared for. It is quite an unsettling photo in many ways, but it captures the essence of the world outside the orphanage; it is an unedited glimpse of the surrounding community's conditions. Patricia's caption reads, "Encontrando nuevos amiguitos" or "encountering new friends." It is an interesting caption to put beneath this picture, as she clearly feels a communion with those around her. She holds herself in the same regard, even though she has privileges at the Hogar that even she may not be fully cognizant of, like reliable meals, a bed to sleep in, clothes, shoes, and, most importantly, unconditional love from the nuns.



Figure 33. An Instagram photo by Patricia.  
"Encontrando nuevos amiguitos..."

Most of the photos that Patricia posts are ones that show her to be in a happy state (Figures 34, 35, 36, and 37). She is with friends, with the nuns, cooking, eating, and seemingly enjoying life. Her decline in shared photos is fairly sudden, with fewer and fewer posts and comments coming from her side. If one really studies her photos chronologically, one can see that she has steadily gotten thinner in her portrayals. But it is her complete cessation of the project that demonstrates a real shift. Figure 36 she captions: “Haciendo ricos panetones” or “making yummy panetones,” which is a traditional Italian fruit cake made around the holidays.



Figure 34. An Instagram photo by Patricia





Figure 35. An Instagram photo by Patricia.



Figure 36. An Instagram photo by Patricia.  
“Haciendo ricos panetones.”



Figure 37. An Instagram photo by Patricia

Patricia's breakdown in communication and project work stemmed from a multitude of reasons: her parent's marital concerns, leaving the orphanage, lack of means and support, lack of access to a safe area to take pictures and post them on the Internet, and most concerning of all, lack of good health and energy at just 17 years of age. Although in round two of the interviews, she was emphatic about her desire to study architecture and attend a five-year program at the university, she was also intensely saddled with the emotional and mental tribulations of her family life. In the very last pictures, one can see how tiny she is, how unhealthy she looks, and how startling it is to witness the change in her over the first six or seven months of this endeavor. The final pictures show Patricia standing with a few of the girls from the project group. You can clearly see how emaciated she is, sandwiched between the other two girls (Figure 38). The caption reads "en camino," which translates into "on the way." This meaning is somewhat mystifying; there is not real explanation as to where she is going in her life, and soon after this photo was posted, she was hospitalized.



Figure 38. An Instagram photo by Patricia. “En camino.”

The very last picture Patricia ever posted was approximately 22 weeks ago and is a shadowy portrait of herself and an American volunteer walking through the streets of Lima (Figure 39). Unfortunately, Patricia’s story took another twist as she entered a center for treatment of anorexia; her recovery is expected to be more than two years spent in this hospital, and Patricia’s chances of ever attending college and securing a scholarship are looking bleak. Sadly, just a few months after Patricia entered treatment for her disorder, her mom died of what appears to be health-related issues. Patricia is not allowed to have contact with the other girls, and the nuns have received intermittent updates on her care. An American sponsor was found by one of my initial contacts at the Hogar to pay for her care, which has been very expensive. Because her disorder is so life-threatening and her health condition fragile at best, her ability to continue with the project was compromised, and only time will predict how she fares later on in life and whether she will eventually be able to complete her education and maintain a relationship with the nuns in the future.



Figure 39. The last Instagram photo posted by Patricia

### **Case Study Participant 5: Anahi**

Anahi Prehtel, who was 16 years old last August, was highly recommended by all of the nuns for this project, but most pointedly by Mother Alexandrina. She came to the orphanage two years ago when her mother was killed in a car accident in Lima. She has a younger sister at the Hogar as well. Anahi also has an older brother who is single and 27 years old. She spoke briefly about one day living with him. Their father died when the girls were both quite young from complications due to his diabetes. She told me in her interview that she did not remember him so well. Anahi's family is originally from Hunin, which is a province located in the center of Peru.

Mother Alexandrina had informed me of Anahi's situation and asked that she be a part of the project because she seemed to need to be involved in something that might help her focus and she desired mentorship. The man who killed her mother in the car accident is someone of means in Lima, and he sponsored both sisters at the Hogar out of guilt for what happened. During their first year or so at the orphanage, this man would

send them clothes and books for school and in general seemed to watch out for them, but as this study progressed and through subsequent interviews, it seemed that his support suddenly stopped. Anahi did not have any real explanation as to why, but it certainly has made her life much tougher and scarier. Before, she felt that, at the very least, her sister and herself had a patron of sorts, but that is no longer the case.

Anahi spoke often of her mother in our first interview together, citing her as her biggest motivation to make a career for herself. She told me that her mother always emphasized the importance of picking a good vocation. In fact, Anahi seemed to be the most ambitious of all the participants to rise above her situation and do something substantial with her life. She viewed the orphanage as a safe place to be, a happy medium between having a family and living in a dormitory with the older girls, who she seems to have quickly befriended.

When I asked her about her future plans, she told me she wanted to study civil engineering. It is unclear at this junction how she came to this choice of profession, but she told me that her “poverty motivated” her to do something significant with her life. She did not want to live the way her family members lived, and she was certainly very intent on striving for something more.

During the second round of interviews, Anahi told me she had secured a scholarship at the local university. She planned to move out in August with some of the other girls and live in a shared apartment the nuns and university would pay for, so the girls could be closer to their college and not be subjected to such a long commute between the orphanage and school. I also asked Anahi how she felt about the project during the second interview (approximately eight months from start of project), and she stated that she found the project to be “beautiful.” However, similar to many of the other girls, she spoke about her lack of personal time due to the many stringent duties she had at the Hogar, and yet when she did take the time to work on her pictures and postings, she

found great joy in getting outside of the orphanage and exploring her environment and culture while creating art around her life's endeavors.

Anahi has posted 73 pictures since the start of the project a little over a year ago. Her first few posts were simple pictures of herself at a local Peruvian textile market (Figures 40 and 41). Figure 40 reads “Un paseo por Miraflores” or “a passage through Miraflores,” which is an upscale neighborhood in the city of Lima.



Figure 40. An Instagram photo by Anahi.  
“Un paseo por miraflores”



Figure 41. An Instagram photo by Anahi, no caption

When Anahi posts pictures of nature, her most striking photos show the Hogar in all of its splendor (Figure 42). The caption reads, “La Naturaleza en el hogar.” Her next photos show her as a very loving young lady at the orphanage (Figure 43), where she is being embraced by two little residents, and the caption reads, “La Amistad es lo primero” or “Love is first.” Figure 44 shows Anahi in the jungle posing with the villagers and children from that area. She demonstrates a great love for the girls she cares for and an appreciation for the work the Hogar does for the outlying communities. Her caption reads in English: “playing with the kids in the jungle.”



Figure 42. An Instagram photo by Anahi.  
“La naturaleza en el hogar”



Figure 43. An Instagram photo by Anahi.  
“La Amistad es lo primero.”





Figure 44. An Instagram photo by Anahi.  
“Jugando con los niños.”

Figure 45 shows Anahi with her brother, whom she labels as a “super hero.”



Figure 45. An Instagram photo by Anahi.  
“Para mí él es superhéroe...mi hermano.”

It looks as though he was visiting her at the Hogar. Figure 46 shows her again with her brother sitting at a table with her younger sister. The caption reads, “Mis superhéroes mi hermano y hermana” or “My superheroes, my brother and sister.”



Figure 46. An Instagram photo by Ahani.  
“Mis superheroes mi hermano y hermana”

Clearly, she is very close to her siblings and she enjoys academic work and artistic endeavors (Figures 47, 48, and 49).



Figure 47. An Instagram photo by Anahi.  
“Una de las cosas que mas me gusta es danzar.”



Figure 48. An Instagram photo by Anahi.  
“El teatro municipal”



Figure 49. An Instagram photo by Ahani.  
“Practicar el pirograbado agado es algo que spira mi arte.”

Figure 47 reads: “Una de las cosas que mas me gusta es danzar” or “one of the things that I like is to dance.” Figure 48 depicts a “municipal theater,” and Figure 49

captions: “practicar el pirograbado agado es algo que spira me arte,” which in English means: “practicing the pyro-engage is something that inspires my art.” This is a type of art that they do sometimes at the Hogar that I have never see before. The girls basically trace over patterns with a special type of marker. It was never clear who introduced them to this technique or supplied the materials, but most of the girls enjoyed this activity very much.

“A day of diversion” is a picture of the beach at twilight (Figure 50). Taken about 19 weeks ago, Figure 51 shows a photo that looks to be hastily taken of her college classroom.



Figure 50. An Instagram photo by Anahi.  
“Un día de diversion”



Figure 51. An Instagram photo by Anahi.  
“En la universidad”

I was told that cameras, phones, tablets, and any other devices were strongly discouraged at the university and that the girls did not like traveling with them because of safety concerns, so it is surprising to see a picture like this posted. The girls talk avidly about all the robberies that happen within the university; it is simply not a safe place.

Anahi’s posts from approximately 12 weeks ago look to be pictures from her university. The most striking difference in her work to date is the amount of boys and men that are now in her photos. Before, it was mostly pictures of the younger girls and the Hogar, the nuns or her peers, which are all female. As time has passed and she has entered upon a full-blown college schedule, her photos show many young men (Figures 52 and 53). Life has certainly changed drastically for Anahi.



Figure 52. An Instagram photo by Anahi.  
“Ultimos días de clase”



Figure 53. An Instagram photo by Anahi.  
“Lindos recuerdos”

A week before my second interview with Anahi, she posted a picture that she edited into a sort of montage of college life (Figure 54). It reads in Spanish: “Las Cosas se consiguen con esfuerzo por eso a poner mucho empena en esta etapa de la vida universitaria” or “things are achieved with effort to make the stage to university.”



Figure 54. An Instagram photo by Anahi.

“Las Cosas se consiguen con esfuerzo por eso a poner mucho empena en esta etapa de la vida universitaria.”

When I met with her in October 2015, Anahi had been attending college for approximately eight weeks. I asked her if she felt like she had changed very much in the past year, and her answer was a staunch no. She stated: “I think I am still the same, my way of being.” When she described the project, she pronounced it as “a way to get to know oneself” or “something that tells the most important things of my everyday life.” Her life now outside of the orphanage is “hard,” mostly due to her attempts to learn how to handle money and financing in her life. Her life is dependent upon the coexistence of her college roommates, who get “a little extra help from their families.”

Anahi is pursuing her studies in business administration, and when I asked her how she came to pick this subject, she described a seminar she had taken that inspired her to pursue this line of work and she also seemed to be acutely aware of the profitability of working in a field that has potential growth. She seemed to be realistic about her future as someone who must work hard to make her way in life and create a viable career.

Anahi broke the screen on her iPad a little over a month ago, so she has been posting very infrequently to Instagram. Most of her applications are functioning, but not Instagram. She has been borrowing friends' phones and uploading videos to Tumblr, which has been working for her. After I got her a new device, she started posting more regularly, and through subsequent interviews and observations, I learned that Anahi had managed to move outside the Hogar and into an apartment close to her university. The nuns made good on their promise to help pay for her and a few other girls to live there and maintain a place that is relatively safe and within easy proximity to school and activities. Anahi does maintain regular contact and visits with the nuns at the Hogar as well as her friends and sister. She seems to be doing well in her studies and has stayed true to her goal of pursuing a career in her chosen line of study.

### **Case Study Participant 6: Maria**

Maria Lizet Mijahuanca Pinzon was the fifth participant of this study. She was originally recommended by my first four participants. The reason they chose her was never exactly specified, but she appeared eager to participate in the project with everyone. Maybe she was not as eager at first as some of the other girls; nevertheless, she was interested in the work and the group. Maria was 17 years old when we began the project. She is from Cajamarca originally, but her parents are separated and her mother now lives in a province called Drujillo. She has been at the Hogar for 11 years, and she told me that this was because of the severe economic problems her family has suffered.



She is also one of five siblings, and this is a large family to raise for parents who are separated. Two of her siblings were at the orphanage, but have since “graduated,” and Maria says they are studying in Drujillo near her mother.

Maria stated that she liked the orphanage, as she had been there for more than half her life, so she seemed comfortable enough in her surroundings. She was not especially expressive during the interview, so it was a bit tough to get a read on her. She could have also been nervous, since it is an entirely novel situation being asked so many questions while also learning new skills. When I asked her if she liked art, she said she liked making art, but she especially loved music and actually played the clarinet as a hobby. Yet, when I asked her about what inspired her and what she was passionate about, she said, “I don’t know” many times and laughed nervously. It was as if none of these children had ever been asked too many questions concerning who they are as people. When I asked any of them this question, “What motivates you, what are you passionate about?” it was very hard for them to interpret the question and the meaning behind it. My personal observation and journal work helped me realize that perhaps the girls were having trouble with the concept that a pseudo-stranger was taking the time to get to know them and ask pointed questions about who they are in the present and who they hope to become in the future.

Unfortunately, Maria left the Hogar approximately 20 weeks ago with no clear explanation. She was done with her studies there and fully expected to move on, but she left the nuns and Hogar with very little information about where she was going and what she was going to do with her life. Despite the fact that she told me during her initial interview that she most likely wanted to stay in touch with the nuns, she has not done so, although she continues to post on Instagram and contribute to the project. There is no way I can directly communicate with her, since her family’s household likely does not have a phone line and I am not even sure she still knows how to use her email address. The pictures she continues to post show an extremely different life outside the orphanage.

When I asked Maria about her relationship with her family, she gave lukewarm responses and simply stated that she was close to her two sisters who had been at the Hogar before her and were pursuing their studies elsewhere. The nuns at the Hogar could only assume that she had gone to live with her mother and sisters as well. When I asked her if she planned to stay in touch with her peers at the orphanage and with the nuns, again she gave me a very half-hearted answer. She said, “I suppose” and then, “Well, I have been here for all of my life,” but “I have made it clear to myself that I must go outside.” Out of all of the girls, Maria seemed the most determined to get out of the Hogar. It was never in her plan to stay on and pursue a scholarship there, and she did not seem very interested in staying in touch with her peers.

In fact, for Maria, this really was not such a collaborative project. As demure as she seemed when I interviewed her and trained her on the devices, her photos, especially when she left to live outside the orphanage, show her to be a very different person. A lone wolf on one hand, but also an adventurer, she did not share the same fears as some of the other girls about the outside world; in fact, she hardly seemed fazed by it. It appears that the first chance that she got, she took off from the Hogar and has not looked back since. The question remains: Why does she keep posting?

Since the start of the project, Maria has posted 182 times, which puts her up there as one of the girls who posts the most pictures and videos to social media. Her first picture, 59 weeks ago, is one that someone took of her with two volunteers posing next to Anahi (the fifth participant of this group). The four of them are sitting together in the area where Internet is available, the small corner beige lounge chair where anyone who needs Internet service must work (Figure 55), where she captions: “Mis amigos!” or “my friends!”



Figure 55. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
“Mis amigos!”

A few posts later, approximately seven weeks into the project, she posted a picture of herself in costume with a few of her friends. The caption reads, “Una foto de recuerdo en la selva con mis amigas,” or “A photo to remember of myself in the jungle with my friends.” The four girls are elaborately dressed in bright orange, but it is unclear here what the costumes are representing or what the occasion is (Figure 56).



Figure 56. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
“Una foto de recuerdo en la selva con mis amigas”

By week six, Maria had already posted over ten pictures, which demonstrated to me that she was taking this project seriously and committing to the goals of the project. She followed the themes, puts good descriptive verse below each picture, and created her own voice within her subject matter. Figure 57 shows a large tree from her view with the caption, “Arboles increíbles en nuestra selva amazonica” or, “Incredible trees in our Amazon.”



Figure 57. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
“Arboles increíbles en nuestra selva amazonica”

The most incredible output from Maria comes also from her pictures that depict what matters most to her. During my first and only interview with her, I never could have guessed that she had such a high appreciation for literature, art, music, learning, and social activism. Maybe she was too shy to talk about all of her passions and joys. Figure 58 shows her holding a small child with the caption, “Dar una sonrisa a un niño es la mayor forma de sentir felicidad y paz interior” or “Giving a smile to a child is the best way to feel peace and happiness inside.”



Figure 58. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
 “Dar una sonrisa a un niño es la mayor forma de sentir felicidad y paz interior.”

Figure 59 shows Maria standing in a red uniform with a large instrumental band, and she is proudly holding her clarinet. The caption reads, “Un grand arte: la música” or “The great art: music.” Figure 60 shows Maria posing alone with her clarinet, and Figure 61 shows two rows of girls “dancing.”



Figure 59. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
 “Un gran arte: la música”

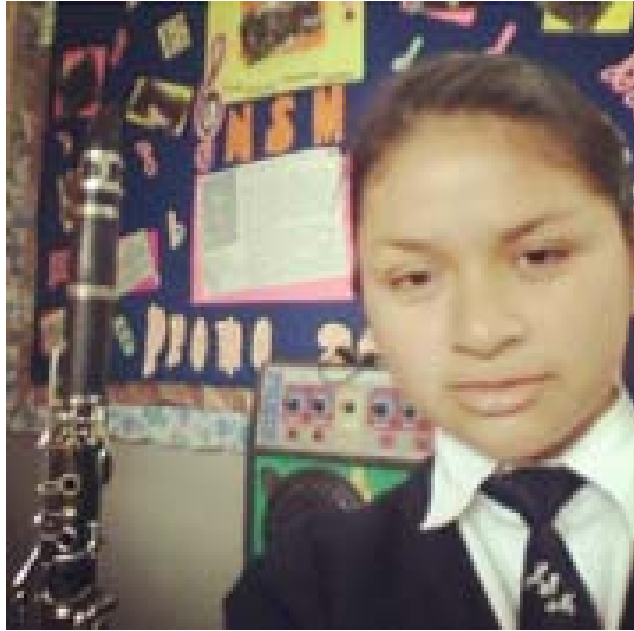


Figure 60. An Instagram photo by Maria



Figure 61. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
“Danza”

Figure 62 shows a compilation of Peruvian textiles and objects that she labels simply as “art.”



Figure 62. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
“Arte”

Finally, Figure 63 shows four books carefully laid out on what looks to be her bed. Two are by the very famous author Paulo Coelho, and the other two are a bit hard to identify. She writes the caption simply, “Literatura.”



Figure 63. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
“Literatura...”



Figure 64. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
“Musica...”

Maria seems to be very taken by Coelho as an author and even posts a picture of him (Figure 65) with the caption reading, “Paul Coelho....me gusta su filosofia de ver la vida” or “Paul Coelho.... I like his philosophy on the truth of life.” Figure 66 shows Maria diligently studying, and her caption translates to “much studying to prepare for the mathematics exam.”



Figure 65. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
“Paulo Coelho...me gusta su filosofia de ver la vida...”





Figure 66. An Instagram photo by Maria with no caption

Maria's Christmas at the orphanage was an eventful one with photos posted of her posing by various Christmas trees and experiencing different food and festivities. As it was her last Christmas at the Hogar, she portrayed it as one that would provide fond memories for her as she made her way out of her school and home and into the outside world.

As a researcher, looking at her photos and trying to piece together a story that makes sense of the various pictures that she continued to post, it does seem as though Maria went back to live with her parents or siblings. Figure 67 shows her posing with her brother at a beach. The caption reads, "Mi hermano y yo" or "My brother and I." They look like they are having a good time, wearing matching hats. He looks a bit older, with a protective hand around her shoulder. Figure 68 shows a grainy looking picture of her mom, holding a guitar. (Is this where she gets her musical proclivities from?) Figure 69 shows Maria playing a guitar as well. It is such an interesting perspective to see pictures of the mother and daughter juxtaposed, in virtually the same sort of pose. For Figure 68, Maria says: "Mi mama ensayando para el concierto del 'Hotel California,'" or in English,

my mother is preparing for a ‘Hotel California’ concert,” and Figure 69 Maria follows up with “El arte del alma” or “art from the soul.”



Figure 67. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
“Mi hermano y yo...”



Figure 68. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
“Mi mama ensayando para el concierto de ‘Hotel California’”



Figure 69. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
“El arte del alma...”

The last photo that Maria ever posted (Figure 70) shows a small and colorful parade. The picture is taken from the front, where a man is dressed in white with red embellishments holding a red flag. The caption reads, “El orgullo de mi pais” or, “Pride in my country.”



Figure 70. An Instagram photo by Maria.  
“El orgullo de mi pais”

Despite Maria's departure from the Hogar, she seems to be faring well. The photos she posts of her life outside of the orphanage are exciting and very different from the ones within the walls of the Hogar. Her perspective is so full of vigor. She is a person freed from a life that she greatly respected, yet is somehow relieved of her presence there, her uniform, the daily rituals, and the schedule.

Since traveling back to Lima in October, my translator has informed me that Maria is indeed living with her family and has enrolled in a university. Her choice of studies is interesting, as it is in education, but I am still unclear as to how she is supporting herself or paying for college, as she has received no scholarship or funding. Again, judging from her pictures, she seems to be doing well, and if she keeps studying, then perhaps more opportunities will open up for her in her community. She has not kept in touch with the nuns or any of the other girls thus far, although they all speak very highly of her and feel close to her because they can keep track of what she is doing via the pictures and videos she continues to upload.

### **Case Study Participant 7: Veronica**

Veronica Milagros Yujra Larico was my 7th participant and was 16 years old at the start of this study. She was another girl expected to leave by December and recommended by a few of the other girls for this project. She is described by those that know her best as the most religious out of all of the girls. I am not sure what that means exactly, but maybe she is more ardent about the Catholic practice and rituals than the others are. It seems as though she helps the nuns most with duties particular to the church and maintaining the strict Catholic rituals and order of the church at the Hogar.

Veronica definitely smiles the most out of all the girls, and she seems to be very well adjusted and happy in her environment. She is extremely young looking and youthful acting, naïve, and innocent (although most of the girls at the Hogar seem to be

impressively naïve and sheltered, to be honest). But Veronica seems even more so, maybe because before she came to the orphanage, she was being raised by her parents on an isolated farm with very little outside presence available to taint her perspective. The reason Veronica was brought to the orphanage was because of the isolation of her parents' farm and the very likely risk that great harm could come to her if she attempted to attend school in that province, where everything was so far away and at extremely inconvenient distances.

Veronica came to the Hogar four years ago from Puno, a province in southern Peru. Her father is a farmer, and her mother works somewhere that is described as "far from the house" they live in. Veronica also has three older brothers who most likely work on the farm with their father. She was brought to the orphanage by her mother under the pretense that there was "no one to watch over" her. She described her family as having many outstanding debts and problems with bank loans and told me in her first interview that she preferred not to see her family so stressed out all the time. She liked being away from the reality of their many economic problems and protected from the way they must live.

When I asked her what she planned to do in her future, she stated that she had some "options," but was not sure what the best plan would be exactly. If she decided to go back to the province from which she came, there would be very little opportunity for her there. It seemed that the most prudent choice was for her to stay near the Hogar and pursue her education. It was when I interviewed Veronica some months later that she opened up the most about her internal struggle between her perceived obligations to her family and her own wants and needs. Since December, she had been living in the section of the orphanage where young girls stay who are studying to become nuns. Since she had maintained a high grade point average, she had been awarded a scholarship at the university and chosen to study civil engineering in construction.

She was quite unsure about her choice of study and life plan. Her parents had urged her to go to college, telling her that she was the “last hope of the family to get an education,” yet Veronica really wanted to train to be a nun at the Hogar. She was not sure that she was up to the task of studying engineering for five years and was even more uncertain about how she could make a career out of it. She ultimately forwent her choice to become a nun to please her parents, but described her decision as one that brought her great terror and discomfort. She had gone in February 2015 to visit her family after a long period of time of not seeing them, and that is when she solidified her option to study at the university, even though she emphatically expressed to me that she felt as though she did not “have what it takes to study civil engineering.”

It is interesting to note in this particular study how universal it is for girls like Veronica to feel they have duties or obligations toward their family units. These girls go months or even years with little to no contact with their parents or siblings, yet they feel they must please their biological parents and honor their wishes. Since December, Veronica had been helping the nuns with daily rituals—mass, chores, and the multitude of duties that are part of a very large orphanage. She expressed deep contentment in performing these jobs. Of all of the girls, she was the one most resistant to leaving and the least enthusiastic about departing from a place she described as “comforting” and “protective.” Her distress over her family’s urgings was visible, but she had wholeheartedly resigned herself to their will, and now only time can reveal how she fares in the outside world attending college.

As for the continuation of the project, she described her process of picture and video making as one that was deeply contemplative. She stated that she took “far more pictures” than she posted because she wanted to be very decisive about what she put on her Instagram and how she actually built her life narrative. Veronica also spoke about Maria Lizet, the young girl who had already left the orphanage but who continued to post from the “outside.” She liked being able to view her photos and track what she was

doing. Maybe it gave her some solace to see a girl living her life away from the Hogar and faring decently well, at least as far as her pictures revealed.

Veronica is my most prolific poster; she has posted 266 times since the start of the project in August 2014. Her first picture posted 66 weeks ago was of her cooking in the kitchen of the Hogar (Figure 71), and the caption reads, “Cocinando para mis demas amigas” or “Cooking for my other friends.”



Figure 71. An Instagram photo by Veronica.  
“Cocinando para mis demas amigas”

Veronica’s photos of life both inside and outside the Hogar are quite detailed. She posts very frequently, so a timeline and narrative is much clearer in her work. Figure 72 shows a group of people that look like foreigners, villagers, nuns, and some older kids from the orphanage standing at the base of a large hill or mountain. The foliage is leafier than that surrounding the orphanage, so I am assuming they are somewhat far away. The caption reads, “Transmitiendo nuestra alegria a los demas” or, “Transmitting our joy to the people.”



Figure 72. An Instagram photo by Veronica.  
“Transmitiendo nuestra alegría a los demas...”

Figure 73 shows a picture of many young girls dressed up in traditional Peruvian costumes performing a dance. This caption reads, “Danza tipica del peru que present el hogar en el dia del vingo” or “Typical dance of Peru presented at the Hogar” (presented on a particular religious holiday).



Figure 73. An Instagram photo by Veronica.  
“Danza tipica del peru que present el hogar en el dia del vingo”



This is a really wonderful shot, beautiful color and composition leaving the viewer with the essence of a moment that is so perfectly caught. Veronica's page is filled with her hobbies and favorite pastimes. Figures 74 through 77 show Veronica baking (or producing pastries for the Hogar, "produccion de pasteleria-hogar"), playing volleyball, caring for animals, and making art. Figure 77 reads, "Cortando flores del papel por dia de la primavera" or "making Italian flowers from paper for spring."



Figure 74. An Instagram photo by Veronica.  
"Produccion de pasteleria hogar"



Figure 75. An Instagram photo by Veronica.  
“Me gusta el voleibol”



Figure 76. An Instagram photo by Veronica.  
“Me gusta encariñar a los gatos...”



Figure 77. An Instagram photo by Veronica.  
 “Cortando flores de papel por dia de la primavera...”

Figures 78 through 80 present what looks to be a very special day in Peru, a celebration of the day of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception or “Pasa calle par dia de la virgin de la inmaculada concepcion.” Most of the community participates in this street parade that honors Mother Mary, the mother of Jesus and an important figure in the Catholic Church.



Figure 78. An Instagram photo by Veronica.  
 “Pasa calle por el dia de la virgin de la inmaculada concepcion”



Figure 79. An Instagram photo by Veronica.  
 “Pasa calle par dia de la virgen de la inmaculada concepcion”



Figure 80. An Instagram photo by Veronica

My absolutely favorite photo of Veronica’s is Figure 81, which shows a nun cutting a whole fish. I believe it is perfectly framed in a simple and succinct way of

showing life at the Hogar. It reads in Spanish: “Nuestra querida Hermana Ruth Impiando al pobre pescado,” in English meaning, our favorite Sister Ruth preparing fish.



Figure 81. An Instagram photo by Veronica.  
 “Nuestra querida hermana Ruth Impiando al pobre pescado”

Veronica’s New Year, January 2015, shows a humble picture of a nun dressed in white (Figure 82) who looks to be in quite a celebratory mood. Veronica’s last picture was posted 13 weeks ago and is a simple one of her sitting on a bench with Anahi and a few other girls, with her backpack next to her. She is in front of her university, having finally left the Hogar and embarked upon college life and all of its many intrigues.



Figure 82. An Instagram photo by Veronica with no caption

Finally, it is October 2015, the project has been ticking by for more than a year, and I am able to interview some of the girls for the third time. Veronica, who had posted the most frequently, informed me that her tablet had simply stopped working a few months ago, and that is why she had to stop sharing her photos so often. Most likely, since the tablets were used and she was recording a lot of videos and taking many photos, the device just fizzed out. I needed to be really sure that if I did get her a new device, she would continue the project. She emphatically said she would and went on to describe the project as a sort of bonding experience with her seven other peers. In her second interview, she expressed a deep love for art and for drawing especially, but due to practicalities, she decided to stick with her intention of studying engineering. According to her, the university gives more money to students who “study science, technology or engineering” as opposed to the arts/humanities degrees. So despite her multitude of reservations, Veronica has managed to stick to her plan of pursuing a very high-level degree.

Veronica has currently been attending the university for about two months now. She was living in a large dormitory building near the college with seven other girls and commencing her five-year degree in civil engineering. She stated that she had become more comfortable with her choice to pursue her education, rather than become a nun. She was finding her footing, I suppose, and making new friends and seemed fond of being able to share her achievements and her moments with the rest of the group.

In all honesty, it was a relief to see that Veronica had transitioned out of her comfort zone; she told me again that the “hope of her family rested upon her shoulders.” Economically, her parents and three older brothers were depending on her to come through with an education so that she could help support the family unit. What an interesting shape this study has taken: a girl who at one time had wanted to become a nun, but always held fast to the idea of working in construction and engineering. She was a girl abandoned at an orphanage as a young child and now expected to educate herself

and grow out of her poverty so that she can take care of her family. The honor and strength that Veronica shows, at only 17 years of age, is truly extraordinary. She bears no ill will toward her parents for her circumstances and seems stoically determined to rise to the occasion.

Lastly, Veronica's innocence and integrity have clearly been preserved by her upbringing, her relationships with the nuns, and her peers at the Hogar. Some lingering questions with Veronica and many of the other girls remain. One of those is how her religion and upbringing may have influenced her relationship with her male counterparts, because in her pictures, like most of the other girls, Veronica gives no indication of any type of knowledge or interaction with the opposite sex. Although the school she attended at the Hogar was coeducational, her interaction with young men her age has been extremely limited. Her descriptions of her relations with boys are fairly sparse. She stated that she placed much higher importance upon her relationships and friendships with girls. When I asked her if she felt she had changed over the past year since the project, she answered, "yes!" mostly due to the difference in her living situations and the fact that she "had to accept the reality that it is different here than living by oneself."

She described the project as "very special because I think it is about transmitting messages about what I live every day so everyone else can know what I think and they can get to know me." The pictures and videos continue to serve as chronicled memories of her time at the Hogar. She seemed to take great pride in her overture, her compiled narrative of photos and videos of her most precious and treasured moments.

### **Case Study Participant 8: Elena**

Elena Veramendi was the last girl to join the group and the first one to completely disappear. It is interesting to note that she is 21 years old. She is the oldest girl of the project, yet just finishing high school (although she looks very young in person). I am not

sure why it took her so long to finish, but my initial impression of her during the interviews was that she was not so enthusiastic about her studies. She was recommended by a few of the other girls (again, not recommended by the nuns), but she did not seem to share the same gusto as some of the others for this particular project. She was the hardest girl to get to know on many levels, and essentially she dropped out of the project with no notice just 20 weeks through. She was one of the girls who posted the least and seemed the most at odds with her environment and her familial history.

In my one interview with her last August, I learned that her family situation was one that was quite dire. Her family had great debts that they could not pay, and her father seemed to blame her mother for these property debts. Somehow, Elena's uncle intervened, took Elena out of her home, and brought her to the Hogar when she was 8 years old. When I asked her about her relationship with her mother, she told me she "did not receive love from her mother" and felt "uncomfortable" around her other family members. She stated that the nuns were her family.

Elena told me her grades were poor, thus leaving her with no opportunity to receive a scholarship. Her other possibility would be vocational school, which is not such a viable option in these circumstances, as no scholarship money is provided for this type of education. Since she was just finishing high school at 21 years of age, I am assuming that she struggled in school and that studying was not something she was necessarily cut out for and impassioned about. When I asked her what she had planned for the future, she stated that she liked fashion and wanted to design clothes, but then also said that she would like to own a restaurant. As dichotomous as these two professions might be, this idea strengthened my overall impression that Elena had very little direction.

She seemed most excited about doing this particular project because she wanted to "learn about technology." During my interview with her back in August, it was hard to really get her to tell me too much about her past or future. Her interview was very brief; she was perhaps the hardest to talk to and get to know. She seemed to be the most



isolated from the other girls and the nuns, so it was not very surprising to many that she left so suddenly and has made so little effort to remain in contact with the Hogar community since her departure.

Elena has posted 103 times in the 60 weeks or so that she participated in the project. Her photos and videos are the only other way I could learn more about Elena, and they show a girl who, though she is 21 years old, is very much part of the high-school culture of the Hogar. Her peers in the photos are all between three and six years younger than she is. Her first post, approximately 61 weeks ago, shows Elena happily painting on one of our established mural walls. As a group of volunteers from my organization had established a prior collaborative arts site there, a number of volunteers had started painting murals on the concrete walls in a semi-neglected area near the volleyball courts.

In her first picture (Figure 83), Elena wrote, “En mi tiempo libre me gusta pintar” meaning, “I like to paint in my free time.”



Figure 83. An Instagram photo from Elena.  
“En mi tiempo libre me gusta pintar.”

Figure 84 shows her sister “Hermana marcielo” who “gusta las naturalezas” or who “likes nature.” This must be one of her older sisters who was visiting her at the time.



Figure 84. An Instagram photo by Elena.  
“Mi hermana marcielo le gusta las naturalezas.”

Figure 85 shows a donation by my primary contact at the Hogar, Diego, who bought new pillows and mattresses for all the girls at the orphanage. One can see some of the girls in full uniform holding their pillows in little rows in front of the freshly delivered mattresses. The caption reads “muchas gracias dios vendiga” or “thank God and God bless you.”



Figure 85. An Instagram photo by Elena.  
“Muchas Gracias dios le vendiga.”

Figure 86 is an especially sweet picture of a nun holding a young dog within a patchy, semi-grassy field. The caption underneath reads, “El perro es major amigo de hombre” or “Dogs are man’s best friend.” A simple acknowledgment of a universally agreed-upon phrase, the colors of this photo and the expression on the nuns face are truly ingenious.



Figure 86. An Instagram photo by Elena.  
“El perro es major amigo de hombre.”

Assuredly, Elena is unaware of her perspective at this point; she is just ten or fifteen pictures into a small section of her life's narrative. She gives her audience only a sliver of who she is, of what she likes to do in her free time regarding her hobbies, her friends, and her family. We see a girl that is committed to her portrait at first, as she sparsely describes her pictures in the captions, she posts regularly, and she follows the themes and stays on task, up until the time she disappears.

Figure 87 is a photo that is surely the truest glimpse of her story, because it evokes so much emotion. What did she mean by it? What was her intention with this one? Where was Elena 56 weeks ago? In her community, I suppose, part of a funeral procession, near to the casket being carried, and perfectly capturing the agony of those in grief. Did she know to have her device with her for this ceremony? What were the circumstances and who was the person that they were all mourning? Elena wrote, "Mi vida mas triste" or "My life my sadness."



Figure 87. An Instagram photo by Elena.  
"Mi vida mas triste"

The rest of Elena's posted pictures demonstrate to me that Elena was doing her best to follow along with the themes and keep up with her postings. Here she is hugging her Aunt in Figure 88, which reads beneath, "Admire a mi tia" or "I admire my Aunt."



Figure 88. An Instagram photo by Elena.  
"Admiro a mi tia."

Figure 89 shows a picture of her mother with her "hermana mayor," or "older sister," two family figures that she also professes to admire. I found this somewhat surprising, considering in her interview she told me that she receives "no love" from her mother. In the picture she posts, her mother looks quite happy with her sister as they are relaxing and posing for the camera at the Hogar.



Figure 89. An Instagram photo by Elena.  
 “Las personas mas admire mi mama y hermana mayor”

Figures 90 through 92 show Elena as a young woman having fun playing with camera tricks to make herself look like a billboard star (Figure 90), frolicking on the beach with friends (Figure 91), and eating ceviche, typical Peruvian cuisine (Figure 92). One can really get a clearer sense of how big the Hogar is from Figure 93. Elena does not leave a description below the picture, but it is a monumental shot and gives great perspective.



Figure 90. An Instagram photo by Elena



Figure 91. An Instagram photo by Elena



Figure 92. An Instagram photo by Elena.  
“Mis familias comiendo ceviche en hel año nuevo”



Figure 93. An Instagram photo by Elena, no caption

The last two pictures that Elena posted were approximately 41 weeks ago. She made two montages of herself and various family members, which actually took substantial technical prowess on her part. Figure 94 shows that she truly put time and effort in figuring out how to work the various mechanisms and programs within Instagram and used her skills to compile a sort of collage of her friends and family. She wrote, “Mis familias que Dios que nos dio en encada mañana,” which roughly translates her feelings regarding her family. She is thankful to God for her “family,” but she seems to be referring to her friends as her family, with the thought that life gave them to her. Figure 95 is another example of very skilled technical work and shows a differing level of skill than some of the other girls. The description below reads: “Un recuerdo mi hermosa,” or in English, “a beautiful memory.” She demonstrates great interest in learning how to manipulate technology and compile images in an artistic fashion and she clearly puts much consideration behind her posts.





Figure 94. An Instagram photo by Elena.  
 “Mis familias que Dios padre que nos dio en cada mañana”



Figure 95. An Instagram photo by Elena.  
 “Un recuerdo muy hermoso”

Elena eventually contacted me through Facebook and Instagram, but she has thus far told me very little about her life outside of the Hogar. She sends me images of hearts

and simple hellos and not much more than that, and from conversations with the other girls, she has had zero contact with them. Her pictures show that she is living in what looks like a rural area with some cousins and extended family. She must be able to receive Internet service in some areas, because she does post pictures and other images a few times a week. It is hard to tell whether she is working or studying, as her pictures are mostly of family, friends, and varying biblical quotes. On some level she is still connected to the project, in that she took care of her device and maintained contact with me as the prompter of the project. One could certainly say that she enjoys her presence on social media and creating little narratives of her life outside the Hogar.

### **Case Study Participant: Mother Ofelia**

Mother Ofelia Maria Avila Gondolfo was one of the first people to greet me at the orphanage when I first visited with my team of people in the summer of 2014. She has continued to be the greatest motivator and spirit of this project and even requested to join along with my group of girls and fully participate together in the work on Instagram. She is 48 years old and has worked at the Hogar for a little over 6 years. Before she was at the Hogar, she worked in a Marine Hospital, but stated numerous times that her heart was always with the girls of the Hogar. She felt her truest calling was to work in this particular orphanage and school.

Ofelia comes from a very good family; in fact, the farm she grew up on is not far from the Hogar. Ofelia felt from a very young age her duty toward serving God and others, but her family was not so convinced and even confused by her desire to become a nun, perhaps because they are considered in Peru as having some means and they felt that their daughter should want to pursue an education and eventually a profitable career.

Despite her mother discouraging her at first from leaving the family to follow a life based on duty and service to God, Ofelia proceeded to stray from creature comforts and a

life with few worries to take care of abandoned and mostly broken-hearted girls. She first became aware of the existence of the orphanage when she was studying to become a nun near the Hogar. During that time, there were even more children and adolescents living there, between 180 and 200 residents (there are fewer now due to a continued strain on resources). To this day, Ofelia brings some of the girls on the weekends to visit the farm she grew up on, where there are horses and guinea pigs and all sorts of other animals and space for the kids to explore. She remains steadfast in her loyalty to her own community and the community of the Hogar.

As I was preparing my project with my first eight participants, Ofelia grew increasingly interested in joining us and contributing her story line to the collective whole. A previous volunteer had given her an iPhone, so I signed her up for Instagram and Tumblr and showed her how to use her device and post pictures for us all to see. I was somewhat surprised by how fast she caught on, and her enthusiasm for the work was incredibly inspiring for all of us. Ofelia's first post was a little over two years ago. It is a photo taken of Ofelia standing with myself and two other volunteers (Figure 96).



Figure 96. An Instagram photo by Mother Ofelia, no caption

From there, she really starts to document her journey as a nun. She appears to be constantly on the move, on missions, at Catholic demonstrations, traveling to the jungle to work at the other smaller Hogar that is such a long journey away, taking some of the older kids on cultural field trips and even to the beach. Her energy seems endless (Figures 97 through 102). Figure 98 reads: “Dando un giro con la familia overley” or “giving a tour to the Overley family.” They must be foreigners that are volunteering at the orphanage; no other explanation is given for this photo and the Spanish is a little confusing.



Figure 97. An Instagram photo by Mother Ofelia, no caption



Figure 98. An Instagram photo by Mother Ofelia.  
“Dando un giro con la familia overley.”



Figure 99. A photo by Mother Ofelia, no caption



Figure 100. An Instagram photo by Mother Ofelia, no caption

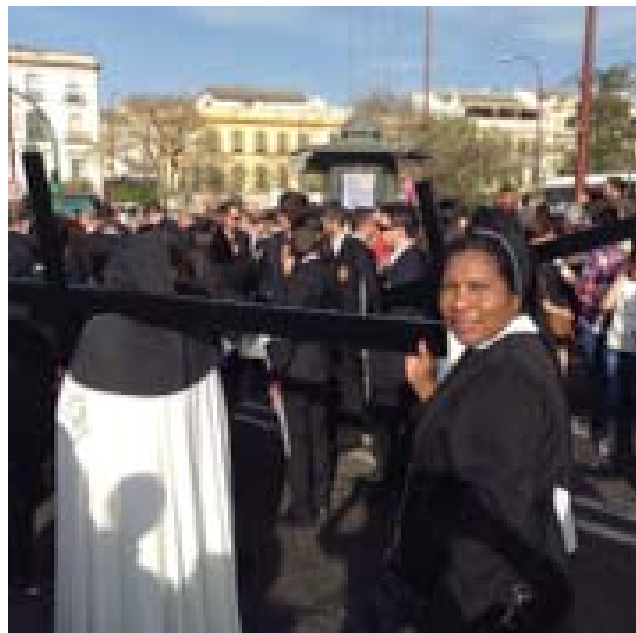


Figure 101. An Instagram photo by Mother Ofelia, no caption



Figure 102. An Instagram photo by Mother Ofelia, no caption

Figure 103 shows Ofelia posing with what looks to be the entire congregation and staff at the Hogar. Although Ofelia did not actually take the picture, the cheerfulness of the subjects and their infectious smiles are remarkable and perfectly captured by the photographer. Ofelia's entire overture resonates with such positivity. She personifies the energy and mission of the Hogar, to love and support the young children and girls she is charged to care for and provide a childhood for, a motherly figure that they all mutually adore and admire.



Figure 103. A photo with Mother Ofelia, no caption

Figure 104, posted approximately 30 weeks ago, is a very interesting scenic picture; it does not have a caption, so as of now I am unsure where this took place. It depicts Ofelia standing with a few other nuns; they are posed next to what appear to be volunteers (the head, Madre Alexandrina, is second from the left), and they are all dressed in white, stark against a sunny backdrop of a large castle-like structure. Figure 106 shows Mother Ofelia in all of her magnificence. Her spirit is truly unlike any I have ever encountered, as is her appreciation for life and for those who surround her. She is atop a yellow concrete-like structure, her arms stretched wide facing a large expanse of a



Peruvian beach. The day looks rather dreary, even though the shot was taken from behind, but her mood permeates the entire picture. Mother Ofelia's joy is sincerely incomparable.



Figure 104. An Instagram photo by Mother Ofelia, no caption

Since the start of the project, Mother Ofelia has posted a total of 147 times. She seems to have become proficient at Instagram, which was a bit surprising. Her journey during the past 16 months has been extraordinary; it seems that she is always on the move and happy to document it for this project. Since then, she has managed to form a Facebook account and send me messages via Facebook and Instagram, including pictures of the girls creating art, going to museums, and socializing in many ways around the subject of art. From my personal observations, this project has promoted Ofelia to cultivate her own aesthetic and to champion more field trips and cultural exposure for the girls of the Hogar.



Figure 105. A photo of Mother Ofelia, no caption

The efforts Mother Ofelia has made collectively with the other nuns have been so rewarding to witness. She has been the motor behind this project, a hero of a mentor to my eight girls. It is one thing to serve as a mother figure to these youngsters, which Ofelia has done so brilliantly, but to see her in another role entirely, that of an artist, a photographer, and a social media aficionado has truly humanized her, and it humanizes the Church in many ways. Ofelia, unwittingly, also represents liberation and an eagerness for artistic learning. Although she is a nun and beholden to the Catholic Church to fulfill

strict obligations, her devotion is to the children and people she serves first and foremost. Her religion is also of the people, for the people, and with the people. Her work, her photos, and the body of work she has produced out of this project undoubtedly helped keep a majority of the participants on track and responsible.

### **Case Study: Mother Alexandrina**

Madre Alexandrina is currently the head of the orphanage and has been in this position for a number of years now. She is, in fact, a former resident of the Hogar, thus having been raised by nuns herself. From a very young age, she realized that she wanted to stay a part of a system that had served her so well. Mother Alexandrina is such an unexpected, counter stereotype of what some might characterize nuns to resemble. She is a very interesting, intelligent, energetic, and dynamic person. She absolutely emanates an inner peace and positivity that demonstrates how important her work is to her and her staunch appreciation for the responsibility of taking care of so many young lives.

Mother Alexandrina, like all of the resident nuns, is from the order of Francisca, Daughters of the Misericordia, Third Regular of St. Francis or San Francisco, and has been part of this order since 1974. She was placed at the Hogar when she was 13 years old and graduated when she was 18. Her mother was a single parent who had very demanding work hours and little time to care for her daughter, so she brought her to the orphanage so that she would not be alone and could be better cared for. The five years of her adolescence that were spent among nuns of this order had a transformative impact upon her life. In fact, for 25 years, she solely ran the school portion of the Hogar, and that is perhaps why she is such an advocating force behind education and the driving power for obtaining scholarships for as many girls as she can petition for. One of the most striking details to note is how accepting Mother Alexandrina is of her circumstances; she exhibits absolutely no bitterness or melancholy over being essentially abandoned as a

young girl by her sole parent. In fact, this seems to be the prevailing attitude at the Hogar, and most of the girls that I interviewed and nuns exhibited extreme encouraging, trusting, and accepting mannerisms. I am not sure if this is a learned attribute or where it stems from exactly, but I observed, time and time again, true camaraderie and kinship among the residents.

According to experience and seniority, the presiding nuns all take turns when running the school or the orphanage. Since there are so many kids, one nun cannot perform both jobs. A few years ago, Mother Alexandrina was “elected,” or selected by the other nuns, to head the entire operations of the orphanage.

This is a tougher task in many ways than running the school, as there are so many bureaucratic duties she must attend to besides taking care of over 100 young girls and adolescents. The resident nuns have formed a sort of “top-down” system whereby the older girls are trained in a way to care for the younger girls and each citizen of the Hogar has designated chores (according to their age level, of course) and scheduled hours of duty. These chores and the daily running of such an intricate and large organization keep the residents quite busy. There is very little leisure time for anyone, even on Sundays, when all the children are expected to attend and participate in a congregational Mass. The Mass is performed as a sort of grassroots operation. A local priest delivers the sermon, and the nuns play the banjo and a variety of other musical instruments, while the children and young girls sing to the accompanying church songs.

The biggest concern at the moment is the lack of funding and the fact that so few girls are choosing to become nuns. In the last interview I had with Mother Alexandrina, she spoke about this as though it was a crisis that was only worsening with time. For instance, an inspections agency that had just been sent to the Hogar by the government to check for any safety violations had left her a long list of tasks that she would be forced to complete in a timely manner before re-inspection a few months later. Yet, they offered her no monetary help to fulfill the checklist of items. Her stress level was extremely high;

she was in the process of imploring the outside community for help with manual labor and looking for ways to procure discounts on purchase prices of materials that were needed for the jobs.

Astonishingly, just purchasing the amount of fire extinguishers she was obligated to have under Peruvian code law cost thousands of dollars. With no secure donors in sight and no government subsidies to aid her in her mission, the threat of actually being closed down by the government was real and very scary. She has made a website that she constantly updates with pictures and news of outreach projects. She immediately put up a plea for funds for the long list of “to do’s” that she was left with. Her job is endless and unrelenting, and so many count on her to come up with solutions to problems that only seem to multiply as time passes. Yet somehow, she maintains a sense of levity, as she believes in something called “divine providence,” meaning that when she asks God for help, this help will somehow mysteriously appear. In fact, all of the nuns put their entire faith in the idea that God will eventually provide and that to worry is foolish and unproductive.

### **Summary**

As previously noted, the case studies profiled here were based upon interviews and analysis of photos and videos of each girl’s life, which were posted on social media. Some of the themes that emerged from the projects are ones that revolve around community engagement, the power of social media coupled with collaborative art making, and the clear necessity of high-quality care and healthy support during the transitioning of these young girls from an orphanage setting into the outside world. This last point is not always attainable despite the best efforts of those involved. This is largely due to mitigating factors in the participants’ lives, such as their family dynamics or their own mental capabilities and emotional coping skills during transitory times.

The art work of the participants clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of a collaborative art making community in that most of the participants continued to relate to one another and keep their connections fluid even after they left the Hogar. Their system of support was one that could be looked at as a sort of collectivism. Though each participant did produce unique and personal portraits, most of them also exhibited a strong sense of belonging within their self-created and self-sustaining community outside of the Hogar. The next chapter will provide a more thorough discussion of the themes of the participants' work and the discoveries that the data from this 16-month study revealed.

## Chapter V

### IMPACT, PROGRESS, AND CHANGE: THE EFFICIENCY OF PHOTO ART JOURNALING WITHIN THE LIVES OF THE EIGHT PARTICIPANTS

#### **Introduction**

This chapter primarily focuses upon the data reported in Chapter IV that was yielded from this dissertation study. Was the research question answered of whether or not the skills the eight girls acquired through their collaborative project actually aided them in chronicling their journeys and what they may have learned while forging on with their changing lives? Was this study able to open a window that allowed us to learn from the outcomes of the girls' experiences of "aging out" of their orphanage? Was photo art making a reliable source for collecting data over the 16-month period of time, and what did we learn about these eight extraordinary individuals? The six themes addressed in the participants' work and those that arose from this project are as follows: community building via art making, community engagement, reflection on self-identity, the proposed effectiveness of cross-cultural art education, shared experience, and effectiveness of a Participatory Community Research framework for this study.

As noted in Chapter II, there is very little written about this topic, especially concerning the after-care of children living in institutionalized care homes. Most people may not even want to ponder what actually happens to young people whom many consider to have slim odds of creating successful lives after being raised in conditions where there is little to no familial support and financial resources are so scarce. Group

home living for children is never an ideal child-care model, but unfortunately, it is an inevitable outcome for children whose parents have passed away, are abusive, or simply cannot raise their progeny for a variety of reasons. Many different care models exist for group home living. In Eastern and Western Europe, for example, it is more common for the government to take care of orphaned children. From my observations working in Latin America, the government seemingly has very little to do with the orphan crisis that plagues a majority of their countries. These children are left to the Catholic Church for the most part, thus community centers, like the Hogar in this study, are formed to take care of them.

Yet, I must emphasize that exceptional circumstances were uncovered at the Peruvian Hogar that allowed the girls to have greater power in their lives and access to higher education. Some valuable lessons may be learned here if they are put into proper perspective., namely, that the achievements of the young girls in this study were inextricably linked with the lengths the nuns would go to make sure they received the highest possible care and opportunities that they may not have been privy to had they been left in their familial homes. The other factor that seemed to provide the participants with great personal resilience and optimism was their spiritual connections, not just to the Catholic Church, but also to one another, their country, and their surrounding community. The allegiance I witnessed among the group of women that resided and worked at the Hogar was one I had rarely seen in my fieldwork. It was truly tested when the girls fell into trouble psychologically or physically. There were substantial bonds formed among this family-type environment, and most of the girls who resided there did their very best to contribute, no matter what their age.



### Authoring Personal Journals

When circling back to the themes of the study and the themes raised by the participants' work, some key patterns did emerge. As previously mentioned, the circumstances of this particular orphanage were unique in terms of the support the nuns, staff, and community offered to the children and young girls. The girls that were willing to work for an education and toward a degree did receive the most assistance from the nuns and university, though the girls had to be proactive in their goals and were determined to follow a stringent academic and work schedule if they were to continue to reside at the Hogar (like Angie, Rosa, and later, Yovany). This meant that they were responsible for maintaining high academic standing while caring for the younger girls at the orphanage and keeping up with the cooking, cleaning, and general maintenance of their residence.

In my second interview with Yovany, she spoke a bit more about her background story, and when I asked if her family would help her with her future endeavors after leaving the Hogar, she responded:

I have a godfather that helps but not with everything, he gives me something for transportation but my mother has no economic possibilities. I have no father and my brother is supported by other people from other countries, religious people that I know very little about. Before, I was at another orphanage with my brother but when he grew older, we were separated. There is another orphanage for boys where my brother went and he is getting good grades so he is able to be supported by foreign families. He is studying communications at the university right now and he has been traveling to the US with the help of this religious group, he is nineteen now and knows English well so he receives some help from others.

I pressed her further about her nervousness regarding leaving the orphanage, and she affirmed her fears:

Yes, I am very frightened because I finished school there, I left for two months but then came back to the Hogar, then I started university, I plan to go to work outside of the Hogar again though and maybe find my own way.

She went on to say that she was very “thankful” to the nuns and that she would always go back there to help, but her goal was to one day secure a job so that she could afford a place of her own. This was no easy feat, and as was learned earlier, she was not able to support herself and had to return yet again to the Hogar, where she started to suffer from severe stomach and digestive problems due to stress.

Anahi was a different story entirely. Her circumstances were truly bleak, but she did manage to move on from the Hogar, maintain high academic standing at the university, and handle her stipend well enough to stay afloat. When I first asked her to expound upon her thoughts about doing a collaborative arts venture together, she was very enthusiastic, but later on she showed even more enthusiasm about the project:

It is really beautiful and interesting and it is a welcome distraction. I am so surprised by what has happened during this project and by the bonding with the other girls over our pictures.

I went on to ask her what most inspires and motivates her? What is her passion? She described that her “poverty “ has being what “motivates” her to do different things with her life.

I do not want to live like this and I want to help others, like my mother. Before she passed away, my mother told me that I must have a profession. I will have to work really hard outside and live alone outside because I have only lived with my brother and sister and my brother is not here and he is single and struggling and my sister is younger than me and must remain at the orphanage while I find work and attend college.

As previously noted, eventually, Anahi did attend college, and she is indeed working toward her goal of overcoming her situation through education and hard work. Rosa and Angie echoed similar sentiments in nearly all of their interviews concerning their future plans and attachments to the Hogar. When I asked Rosa to further specify what her intentions were after she left the Hogar, she replied:

I want have a good profession, I want to have a family and also to help my family. I hope to one day live again near my family in Cajamarca where the air is fresh and not so polluted like in the big city. It is more peaceful there and more quiet.

She went on to say that her parents were her motivating force. This answer was certainly a commonality to most of the participants. Their collective loyalty to their families was a bit surprising considering the circumstances of how most of them ended up at the Hogar, but again, most of the girls expressed a desire to surmount their circumstances and strive not to repeat the mistakes of their parents. Veronica was especially intriguing in what she had to say about her choices and the influence of her parents. I asked her if there were girls at the Hogar who wished to train in the path of the nuns, and she answered:

There are maybe two there but I am not so sure. I wanted to do it from 2012 to 2013 but I decided not to because my mother told me that I was the last hope of the family to study. None of my brothers and sisters have ever had the chance to study and my mother told me that I was her last hope. So I decided not to become a nun because of that. My aunt also wanted to train as a nun but she did not finish the program.

I asked what she would do instead, and she simply stated:

I am now trying to study civil engineering in construction but when everyone asks me about my career, I am told that it is very difficult so I am scared. I am both scared and excited and looking forward to studying at the university.

The particularities of this orphanage did, in fact, lay the groundwork for many of the participants to pursue an education, but the conditions under which they could pursue higher education involved committing a great deal of their time to the orphanage. Essentially, the girls that continued their residency at the Hogar were being groomed to be role models of sorts, mentors to younger generations, and aides to the nuns in exchange for their access to continuing education and ongoing guidance and support from them. Elena, one of the girls who first left the group, struggled academically in high school and was older than the others when she finally did graduate. This may be one reason why she decided to go back to her familial home. The same could be said of Maria, but these are just guesses on my part as the researcher. The only data that I had to analyze for these two girls were their first interviews and the photos they posted on Instagram.

From my observations, the objective of education and vocational training was strongly encouraged by the nuns and teaching staff. It seemed they were all collectively aware that the best way to break the cycles of poverty and a potential outcome of early pregnancy was to promote career-minded goals, education, and spirituality. In fact, the intertwining of these principles was demonstrated in the work produced from the study. On multitudinous levels, I observed the coping skills of the majority of the girls to be extremely high. Rosa, Angie, Veronica, and Anahi especially stood out as healthy and functioning young women who were goal-oriented and diligent in their studies and work. Many of the participants spoke about their commitment to the church and their religion during their primary interviews. This theme carried over into their project outputs and seemingly influenced many of their decisions.

The collectivism surrounding the participants' and nuns' strong Catholic allegiance seemed virtually impregnable and, from my observations, did help sustain the girls during particularly troublesome events throughout the course of some of their early university lives. Even the two girls that dropped out of the project continued to produce work representing themes surrounding their beliefs and family lives. The highlight of this study was their collective loyalties to these fundamental ideals, and it was astonishing, despite their circumstances and, in many cases, arduous life courses, that they were able to cling to a set of principles that defined their existence both within the Hogar and outside of it.

This research project initially enabled the construction of a community-based art program intended to generate new creative skills and connectivity among a group of young women. The participants were asked to acquire photographic and digital skills in order to allow their personal aesthetic sensibilities to develop while documenting uncertainty and, in some instances, very unwelcome change in their lives. When I use the term "unwelcome" in this context, I am referring to the trepidation that most of the girls were experiencing at the time regarding their future endeavors. This underlying fear that they overtly expressed at the start of the project gave this work even greater impetus in its

intent to help lessen the overwhelming sensitivities the girls felt toward their future lives. There was hope that through building an engaged artistic community among the participants, it would allow them to track each other's growth during this time, thus minimizing their sense of loneliness and doubt. As their lives took different paths, it was hoped that at the very least, they could follow one another from afar and learn how to sustain their bonds to each another and their community through social media and photo-art making.

When I asked Patricia what she thought about the goals of the project and her progression during her second and last interview, she replied:

I want to keep on doing the project but I cannot post pictures because I have no internet access where I am living at now, it was easier at the orphanage because at least we had service there.... During my stay at the orphanage we used to work together and take pictures together but now at home it has become much more difficult. My family lives in one room, My bed is in the same room as my parents, there is not privacy. There is one kitchen and one bathroom and we pay 300 soles a month. There are other families that live there as well yet I do not know them but they do not make trouble.

I asked her to describe her typical day of her life outside the orphanage, and what she described was somewhat grim:

I am really not working, just helping mother to sell fruit on the street. My father works as a driver of a small truck from 5 am to 6 pm. We decided to sell fruit salad to help financially. Students mainly buy this type of street food. We sell it under the bridge of the main avenue Pan-American Norte. My mother has very severe eye trouble though. We don't have much money to buy the fruit either.....and if it goes well we will invest a little more. Maybe we need 50 soles to start with to buy pineapple, papaya, things like that. We are very afraid that we may not be successful so we want to start small....

A few months later, Patricia's mother died, and Patricia was then immediately hospitalized for severe anorexia; thus, she ceased participation and contact with myself and her peers. As much as she seemed to enjoy being a part of the group dynamic and

learning new skills, her contributions were short-lived, but a tragic tale was told through her art and through her personal narrative.

Elena, whom I interviewed just once, described her fears regarding getting into the university and what she wanted to do with her future. When I asked specifically about what she wanted to do, she answered:

It depends, I want to study, it depends on my grades if I can get a scholarship. My grades are not so great. For the scholarship, my grades have to be high. There are two courses that my grades are very low, math and “person” social studies and psychology.... I want to be a fashion designer and also I would like to have a restaurant. I love fashion and cooking and I hope to live in Miraflores one day.

I then asked her if she had ever used a camera or video recorder before and to expound upon her thoughts regarding the collaborative art project. She stated:

I want to deliver and I want to know more about these things, to know more about technology. I love art and painting, so I feel good about this project.

There were many steps involved during the preliminary stages of the study, such as creating the multi-layered lesson plans for the girls so that they could learn how to use technology and then later start the process of guiding them toward building an aesthetic. As stated in the introduction and Chapter IV, I assigned the girls themes to follow so that they had direction at first; I also posted pictures on my Instagram page of my work, which followed the accorded themes, so we created a sort of dialogue via pictures. After a few months, I took the training wheels off, so to speak, and asked the girls to start to think less about the opening themes and more about their individual stories.

The main motifs that emerged from the data included community building via art making, community engagement, reflection on self-identity, the proposed effectiveness of cross-cultural art education, shared experience, and effectiveness of a Participatory Action Research framework for this study. Although I was clearly a foreigner and I was engaging my participants in work that revolved around communication through videos

and images, we were, in fact, able to learn a great deal about one another, and clear life trajectories and patterns took shape within each girl's narrative.

In terms of organizing the data in a manner that could reveal unifying themes and patterns while also identifying divergent motifs, especially when it came to the girls who were no longer actual participants in the study, I had to rely mostly upon my analysis of their photos. When I proceeded with follow-up interviews, I could then question the girls that were left in the study about their photos and particularly about their experience learning how to take photos, edit them, and post them on social media. The Internet was a new frontier for them; they had never even had email addresses before we began this work, so of course, they immediately started exploring and experimenting with this new frontier, just as would be expected of most curious adolescents.

The case studies in Chapter IV described in detail the various nuances of each girl's unique story and delved into the ways that may have prompted them to make certain choices in their digital motifs and why they made those decisions. One of the most encouraging aspects of our meetings was when we looked back together as a group over each of our Instagram pages and noted the changes and growth within our time together. There were personal transformations that took place, of course, but the participants' ability to document moments in their lives that were precious to them and the value placed upon their digital diaries that could very well live into longevity was quite a feat.

The photo diaries showed that many of the girls were progressing in their lives, forming new friendships, increasing their time spent outside the orphanage walls, and testing their frontiers. In the case of a girl like Maria, even though we were never again to meet in person, her pictures and the rare video footage that she shared let us all witness moments that brought her joy, what her family and home life looked like, while also displaying her activities and passions. Although the data on Maria was not necessarily sufficient to tell me what she was doing to support herself, it was enough to see her still on the map and attempting to participate from afar. Without the social media interaction

and the connection we all made on the first few days of the project, we would probably never know what happened to her or to Elena for that matter. It would have been helpful to have some more follow-up interviews with Maria and Elena, but the primary source of data was not the interviews for any of the girls. The most effective modes of communicating certainly evolved out of the shared pictures and short videos.

During the first and only interview I conducted with Maria, she told me a little bit about herself, but her photos and short videos revealed a great deal more about her experimental and imaginative nature. She had been at the Hogar for twelve years, but when I asked her if she would stay in touch with the nuns and her peers, she was unsure:

I suppose, I don't know. I am close with the nuns I guess, I have been here for twelve years so....

She refused to elaborate more and, from the onset, appeared less afraid to leave, more ready but uncertain. Yet, the arts spoke to Maria on some level. Her expressions of joy for music and the need to share her new life outside the orphanage were apparent, and perhaps her video narrative turned out to be the longest, most consistent, and most variable. It was much easier for most of the girls to show their lives rather than tell about them, and this is the primary reason why art-making was so valuable to this study. These are just a few examples of what Maxine Greene (2003) would label as “encounters with art,” where her aesthetic education, though very brief, was “provoked” and her “learning stimulated by the desire to explore, to find out, to go in search. It is self-initiated at some point, permeated by wonder, studied by moments of questioning, always with the sense that there is something out there, something worthwhile beyond” (pp. 46-47). This is the essence, then, of what it means to build one’s personal aesthetic and the ways it can shift over time as one enters different phases in life.

The personal journals of the eight participants all varied in length, in subject matter after a certain point, and in personal perspective. The idea of individual methods of showing or telling one’s story began with the lesson plan and experimenting with one



another and with myself as the principal researcher. As has been previously expressed, the participatory research component of this study was essential in planting the roots of our work together. The girls had to feel at ease on some level, with sharing their personal journeys and coming to grips with their fears and uncertainties. The 16 months that we spent together certainly had their ups and downs, but the memories of such could now be collected and easily recalled within their digital narratives. The photo journals that developed out of this study provided the data that informed the initial research and became tangible keepsakes they could learn from as well.

### **Building an Aesthetic**

The underlying and primary question that primed this study was how the photo artwork of the girls and the subsequent building of their autobiographies over 16 months affected their lives in meaningful and supportive ways. In the demonstration that healthy community engagement can be achieved via art making and the development of personal aesthetic, I sought to gain a deeper understanding of how an art practice could aid the eight participants during a particularly tumultuous time in their young lives. As previously noted in Chapter II, there is a paucity of publications and studies addressing the aftermath of institutionalized care for young people who have “aged out” of their care homes. It is a subject that has seldom been considered due to reasons unknown at this time. From my observations in the field of orphanage work, the most reliable way to investigate a topic such as this is to have the actual subjects do their own research and uncover the mysteries of such an issue.

In other words, there simply was no better way to learn about these unique and personal situations than to ask my subjects to journal their experiences and show, not just to me as the researcher, but also to their peers, teachers, family members, and fellow Hogar residents, what they were seeing, feeling, and doing. In fact, the girls could be as

public (or as private) about their narratives as they desired. They had complete control over what pictures they created to post on social media, what videos or content they wished to share on each social media platform, and how they wished to portray their self-images and attitudes toward their friends, family, peers, school, religion, and culture. This was an important component of the research as it was essential that the participants felt they had full control over their authored stories. After a course of 16 months, they could look back at their pictures and videos and see the changes in themselves and in one another; they created tangible proof of their thoughts and experiences that could ostensibly exist for all time and that they could chose to share with others.

The question of formulating an aesthetic vision and, from that, growing their artistic prowess is one that encompasses the notion that these young women were exercising freedom of sorts. It is through their “development of awareness and sensibilities” (Greene, 2003, p. 8) that they were able to engage with the arts on an increasingly higher level and make choices that would inform their endeavors and color their motives with broader meaning. The very act of creating, learning how to utilize one’s imagination, brings the learner to encounter the arts on a much more intimate level because they are now actively pursuing such entanglements. Whether Maria began to practice her musical studies more frequently or Veronica began to paint more or Angie started to notice the angles of certain shots and how she could reframe them to achieve better balance, intrinsically, there is a change that comes when building an aesthetic.

Many of the girls became more comfortable with their cameras through practice and spending the time necessary to learn how to fully take advantage of the various editing programs and applications available on their computers. Some of them began to express in their posts and interviews how they would take multiple pictures and create short videos in order to achieve higher levels of organization and increased clarity. The drive they exhibited truly deepened their narratives in many cases, and actually generated a large amount of data in terms of each girl’s output.

For instance, Rosa, my first participant, was quite shy at first and unsure about what social media was exactly. She had never had an email account and had never really worked with a camera. Just the act of creating a personal email account that she could link to Instagram and Tumblr (and then later Facebook) gave her access to a medium of self-expression and experimentation she had never had before. She could chronicle her experiences, feelings, and emotions, all through a single picture or a short 15-second video. Her life was now partially on camera, and most importantly, she could share her narrative from a distance, not just with the other participants living in Peru, but with me as the researcher and with the various volunteers that have since come to work at this project site and with whom she has directly interacted. Rosa's constructed aesthetic was organized by her personal vision, and although she relied heavily upon the themes I assigned at first, as months went by, she began to stray, as every girl eventually did, and create her own themes. I described the project in basically the same way as I did before:

PR: We are going to this together on Instagram so that we can follow each other and all of you can see video and pictures of my life while I can see video and pictures of your lives. But when you take your photos, I want you to think about higher concept and put your work in context. For example, before you post, I want you to truly ponder about how to artistically portray your perspective. We will learn how to create an aesthetic framework around basic themes and grow from there. We are not just looking to just take solo photos or random ones that have no cohesiveness to your story. Instead show me meaningful moments in your lives, collect them like treasures and eventually you will see your storyline evolve, you will see a trajectory and from there you can begin to play more and take more risks in a way. Just experiment and above all, have fun with this experience.

Rosa responded in her third interview her feelings about her work as feeling “energized and motivated in a different way somehow”; she was certainly one of my most prolific photographers, and her help with the other participants was unprecedented.

This feat is not one that is unique necessarily to Rosa, but because she remained at the Hogar, along with a couple of other girls, she was able to continue to develop her relationships with the “outsiders,” meaning the teaching artists and other volunteers that

have since visited the Hogar and commenced new artistic projects. In one way, Rosa had taken a starring role in this work because she was both a facilitator and pillar of its guiding principles. As Rosa evolved, her sense of aesthetic vision, her engagement, and subsequent participation in events that took place at the Hogar that sometimes involved activities that were unfamiliar to her became more pronounced. For instance, a year into the project, a group of teaching artists was sent down to the Hogar to create a mural and instrument for the institution. Rosa became the pioneering leader of this project, and in fact, she was interviewed multiple times and appeared in a short film about the efforts of the volunteers. Her comfort in working with art materials and being on camera was remarkable. Clearly, Rosa had come a long way from being the shy, yet inquisitive young girl I had first met, one unfamiliar with foreigners and differing art practices. She could be easily labeled now as a cheerleader for the impact of the arts; though she may have doubted her abilities and questioned the overall end goal of what was intended to be initially accomplished, she quickly found her footing, so to speak, and took the initiative to go farther with the project goals.

As each girl slowly began to build their own personal and shared aesthetic, it did indeed take time for them to get comfortable with their cameras and computers and for momentum to be achieved; individual stories certainly emerged, as well as a very interesting picture of the Hogar itself and its inner workings. For example, a majority of the girls started out taking photos of just their environment at the orphanage, which included the landscape, kitchen and food prep areas, kids at play, while also simply posing with one another. It took a solid few months before any girl seemed comfortable enough to take photos outside of their familiar surroundings. This point may also be largely due to safety reasons. As previously noted in the case studies from Chapter IV, there was very little security at the college, on the bus, and really, anywhere outside of the walls of the orphanage. Because of the overwhelming poverty of the surrounding regions, handheld devices, computers, cameras, and phones were a rare commodity. From

my observations in the interviews and numerous conversations I had with the participants, nuns, and translator, it was simply not safe to take the Samsung tablets outside of their backpacks or purses too often to take pictures.

Thus, it makes perfect sense that during the first few months of the project, the participants preferred to practice in a secure area, and this practice laid a foundation for their narratives. A clear, defined starting point was captured, and an element that each girl chose to focus on in the Hogar was particular to her view. They took photos of what they enjoyed most: Veronica enjoyed cooking, Rosa and Angie enjoyed caring for and playing with the small children, Patricia seemed to enjoy her friends and special outings or field trips, and Anahi enjoyed her friendships and her special bond with her younger sister. Maria loved the arts, music especially, and Yovany, who was the hardest one to tease themes out from, did seem to enjoy taking pictures of more simple subjects and also dressing up for the camera with make-up and differing outfits to pose alone for the camera (this is usually referred to as taking a “selfie”).

Though there was a simplicity in what many of the girls used as themes for their work, collectively we discovered much about one another. Greene (2003) underscores the idea of being “set free” and making “discovery possible again, and exploration. We have to launch ourselves and those others who are free to go on adventures in sense-making. The arts nurture that capacity, as the arts awaken to the process of living itself” (p. 63). The adventure we took together as a group certainly had its ups and downs. No outcome could truly be predicted for any of the girls, but their “encounters” with their own art, the art of their peers, and the expression that was derived out of this journey created significant meaningful experiences for us all.

## Defining Home

Clearly, the Hogar was a special place where the nuns had created a sanctuary of sorts, a barrier to the outside world. Though outsiders were welcome, there was a layer of protection and respectability that they maintained. For example, the participants took particular pride in their community, but also spoke exponentially about where they each came from. Four of the girls—Rosa, Elena, Maria, and Veronica—were born in the outer regions of Peru, far from Puente Piedra and far from any extenuating family members and siblings, but they spoke fondly of the regions they were from and looked forward to every trip “home,” even if it was years away. If the nuns had saved enough money, they would buy the girls bus tickets home, bus trips that were long and arduous journeys, but for which they were supremely grateful.

The sense of family and its connotations for each girl was consistently conflicted: home and family were dualistic for most of them. Anahi only had her sister and brother left after her mother died in a car accident, so the Hogar was her primary home no matter what. Others did have an indication of home being somewhere else and, later on in their photo-making work, would post prolifically about their family members and their ideals of home, mostly founded upon principles of respect and responsibility. From my observations, every single participant felt a duty toward their parent, whether they were alive or not, whether they had abandoned them or had abruptly cut contact off; they all remained steadfast in their belief that they had an obligation to uphold a stringent moral code. This I perceived not just in my conversations with many of the girls. One can only speak so much about how well behaved they are; this proved to be a very consistent and common theme within all of their pictures.

The two girls that disappeared, Elena and Maria, have posted to date mainly pictures regarding their home life and family life. It has so far been unclear if they have had any relations with boys or started to pursue a line of study or vocation. Elena is

especially religious-minded in her quotes, often citing biblical verse on both Facebook and Instagram and also using many different editing and lens filter options to “doctor” her photos. Maria is a little more relaxed in her style, posting pictures of some of her friends and home life, no quotes, no real photo editing or showmanship, but her simple displays of everyday life are quite telling. She seems happy enough, and somehow her photos show her basking in her freedom from the routines of the Hogar and the life she left behind.

Notably, the children and young girls consistently display an overwhelming sense of dignity and pride in themselves. There was no stigma attached to where they came from because, as I learned, those that arrived at the orphanage were better off than many children and adolescents growing up in underserved and impoverished communities all over Peru. Most children are lucky to be able to attend elementary, primary, and Prep School while receiving regular meals and consistent care. Peru has a terrible problem with governmental aid and programs for underserved populations. It is institutions like the Hogar that are depended upon the most for the fulfillment of basic human needs.

### **Functionality of the Study and the Role of Social Media**

In a sense, the nuns of the Hogar had laid a groundwork for their young wards to be interested in education, to be ambitious, to have faith, and to try new things. Yes, there was the ever-present and very real fear of the outside world, though it would seem normal given the personal and familial circumstances of the eight participants, all of whom had come from terrible poverty and living conditions. From my observations working at different orphanages, there are minimal to no after-care and support services once children have reached a certain age. The only exception I have seen with a child who becomes a young adult is one with special needs. In that case only will an orphanage continue to care for that person.

At the Peruvian Hogar, the nuns did not simply display a “sink or swim” mentality toward the girls for whom they cared; in fact, their attitude was much more flexible. The girls were allowed full breadth in decision-making regarding where they would go, what they would do, and how they would leave (or what the conditions would be if they stayed). These conditions were usually regarding what their contributions would be to the orphanage if the nuns provided room, board, and money for transportation. This was a process tailored to the needs of the girls and something I had truly never witnessed in my decade or so of working in Latin American orphanages. Two girls left the Hogar entirely. Another became extremely sick and was hospitalized for more than half the study’s duration. Two girls left the Hogar to live in an apartment close to the university with other peers their age. One girl tried to leave and get a job while attending university, but soon found that she could not maintain such a schedule and returned to the Hogar. Finally, Rosa and Angie never truly left for a multitude of reasons explained in the case studies, the biggest one being that they felt they had such a large obligation to the nuns and children and they felt the orphanage was their home.

The collaboration element that lay at the heart of this dissertation work was meant to extend, for the participants, into what was a new world of culture, one that was global in that the girls were introduced to the Internet, social media, email, and the concept of actually peeking into the lives of foreigners. At first, it was just my life they were peeking into, and then the lives of the volunteers that came and went as time went by, but increasingly, as their social groups expanded, so did their presence on social media and their ability to sustain connections to one another and those that lived far away.

Yet, how large of a presence they decided to have on social media was left largely up to the girls as to how much exposure they wished to seek out. In other words, they had to figure out how to use the new media outlets to their own advantage. I never taught them how to use Facebook, how to hashtag, or anything else that I thought might affect the participants as being somehow negatively exposed or influenced by the outside world.



I felt this was an important point to my work with them. Initially, there were just a few of us on Instagram, sharing photos and videos. I made sure that Tumblr was completely closed off to the general public, because that was our primary shared platform where longer videos could be posted and narratives shared.

However, Tumblr actually turned out to be the least used social media platform in this project. It was a trial-and-error process, and, due to the lengthy amount of time it took to post long videos and the confusion about Tumblr's interface, the girls rarely utilized it. Thus, Tumblr became an impractical way to collect data and more of a frustration for the girls than anything else; Instagram was the primary source of information for me to study the subjects' lives. Instagram also offered the girls many editing options, such as filters, color and contrast controls, and cropping methods. For example, as Yovany progressed in her project, she began to make use of the features that each site provided and began to post cartoonish photos of herself, edit herself into photographic scenes, and use the Internet to grab images or quotes that resonated with her and post them with her personal comments below. Elena was another girl that liked to employ the options offered by Instagram to doctor her images and utilize the Internet to explore images and ideas that inspired her work.

Each participant experimented in some form, but some did so more than others. The simple act of taking a picture of a scene or moment was enough for a few of the girls, but others went farther and discovered how to use the multiple functions on their devices and the features of the media sites to advance their practice. The creative aspect of the project was most supported by the many options of Instagram, such as the ease of taking pictures and filming 15-second films (all films on Instagram have to be between 10 and 15 seconds, no more and no less). This promoted the girls to learn more and more about how to use the app, how to view their peers' material, and how to be selective about what they chose to post. During my second round of interviews, nearly every girl spoke about how they loved to take many different angles of a shot; they were literally taking

hundreds of photos with their cameras, combing through them to find the images they liked most, and then they would either post them or start some sort of editing process. This showed a real intent on their part to learn and explore. This was true even in the unforeseen and unfortunate case of Patricia, who fell very ill. Before she went into treatment, during my second and last interview with her, she expressed a strong desire to stay with the project and continue. She felt that it gave her a sense of connectivity and exclusivity and she enjoyed “the learning and growing” that she had initially started to cultivate in her practice.

The eight participants were the only ones chosen out of many that were working on this project, and they uniformly expressed the excitement they felt to be a part of a group dynamic and to gain new skills and opportunities during our initial training sessions. Despite the precautions I took, such as not letting the girls learn how to hashtag in the beginning or “follow” outsiders on Instagram (outsiders meaning strangers, people they had not met and that were not a part of this collaborative work), like most young adolescents and adults, the curiosity of the girls became increasingly apparent as they discovered how to garner more friends, more attention, and draw more peers into lives that were once closed off to them. When a participant posted a photo, they had options concerning their audience: whose friend requests on Facebook they chose to accept, and who they decided to “follow” on Instagram and in turn be “followed” by.

Thus, the audience of their work grew from a few volunteers, a singular nun, the eight participants, and myself to many more people: students they met at their university, other extended family members that were able to get intermittent access to social media (or who they could have had influence upon), and sometimes even close friends of mine in America and Europe. Their range of contacts grew exponentially, so they could now view the lives that others were leading in foreign lands. From the onset, I always cautioned them about what sort of image they wished to portray and maintain authenticity in their voice. I wanted them to truly understand the process of photo art making and

journaling before they just started posting random pictures with little thought behind them. I emphasized the idea of a special moment being captured, one that was meaningful to them and that would be a sort of building block to many more layered memories and moments. The construction of these moments over time would then reveal their unique stories.

One of the most remarkable happenings in this community that evolved from this project was the fact that most of the nuns joined Facebook and Instagram after Mother Ofelia's initial entrance into the world of social media. They started posting stories about *their* lives—their pilgrimages, the daily rituals of the Hogar, the various events and fundraising ventures that they embarked upon; the nuns' chronicles actually deepened the narratives, on many levels, of the participants themselves. A fuller picture emerged of the everyday life at the Hogar through the nuns' photos; the routines became more apparent, and it highlighted the experiences of the eight participants. There was that much more context given to the background of the girls, and it seemed that the enthusiasm the nuns shared, especially on the part of Mother Ofelia, motivated many of the participants to stay with the work and keep to their timelines.

This also helped propel the head Madre to work on getting better Internet for the Hogar, but ultimately, it was truly impossible to install wifi, even in just the library. The infrastructure simply was not there yet, and the expense to keep up such a feat remains quite high. So, as previously mentioned, the video journaling idea ceased fairly early on in the project, and the Tumblr site stopped being used, as it required hours of downloading time and was impractical compared to Instagram, where it was so easy to edit and post photos and also where videos could not be more than 15 seconds long. The time to upload was an important factor in this project, as the five girls that did stay with the project continuously were under severe time management stress due to their work and school obligations. The corner where they posted their pictures, a small space where the

Internet signal was located, would become crowded at times, and it was a difficult place to concentrate because of the busyness of this area.

### **Change and Consequence**

Another interesting layer to this work, which was touched upon earlier, concerned the girls that left the Hogar and due to their circumstances, left the group—Elena and Maria. They both took the time to form Facebook profiles without any prompting from myself as the researcher, and it is clear that they made extensive efforts to communicate and connect with others on their site as well as on Instagram. They clearly still wanted to be noticed, although they were living in very rural areas where Internet is more than likely very difficult to locate. They still managed to find the places where Internet was available and the time to post not just photos but, even to this present day, their thoughts and, here and there, some quotes that seemingly provide them with inspiration.

However, it is easiest to judge the success of the project's end goals by the girls who remained closest to the origin of the study and who were the easiest to follow and collect data upon. It seemed the pattern was that the two girls who joined the study first and helped formulate the plan and recruit the other participants kept up with the work and also demonstrated a responsibility toward the other girls. Angie and Rosa exhibited the largest signs of true desire to keep the community together, uphold the ideals of the Hogar, the integrity and values their religion brought to their lives, and the resounding after-effects of life at such a place. They were, and still remain, the pillars of the orphanage. They are relied upon by so many, responsible for carrying the torch, so to speak, by keeping the place running in a fashion where change was far from perceptible. Change is an inevitable part of life, something that humanity must endure; whether it is good or bad, change is a component that we cannot control. Yet, change is somewhat of

an anathema to those at the Hogar because their model, though very well respected, is simply not sustainable.

The literature review portion of this study directly addresses the idea of a cycle of poverty (Carr, 2013) and the question of how to break such a cycle and bring brighter futures to children who are caught up in this ongoing conundrum. Clearly, the Hogar provides a multitude of spiritual, bodily, and emotional benefits for their young residents, and varying options, such as pursuing a scholarship, seeking out employment, or working at the Hogar, do exist, although one must be motivated enough there to supersede one's circumstances, to fight for more. If they do take up that fight, they will be fiercely aided. Yet, change and its consequences for someone like Patricia, whom I met as a healthy young girl full of reasonable potential, cost her a great deal in the long run. She had to leave the Hogar, she had to take on responsibilities she seemed not quite ready for, and she had to return in some capacity to her family home, where there were numerous problems, both domestic and monetarily. Then, she had to see her mother die of poverty-related disease. This all happened while she was slowly wasting away and developing a severe mental disease.

Patricia's profile is short but striking. She fully participated at first in the study, and her pictures gave a partial glimpse into a life not fully formed yet. Even in her second interview, as frail as she was and living off the grounds of the Hogar and away from the others, she indicated in every way possible that she was motivated to advance her education, yet was at odds with her duty to her parents. She was conflicted, yet when I looked over her "photo-trail," there were no obvious signs of distress at first. Only through time did her pictures show her steady path toward complete cessation of eating and eventual health crisis. In her case, it was most likely a conglomeration of unfortunate life events that contributed to her sharp decline.

The other side of this story is that of Maria, who sincerely reveled in her freedom and has taken every opportunity since then to show us that she is thriving. Though I only

interviewed her once, as noted in her case study, she left abruptly; her narratives really inspired the other girls and excited them. The five remaining girls were enraptured by her photo-journal and frequently referred to her in their follow-up interviews. They drew courage from her adventures and loved being able to peer inside her home and family life in a region none of the girls had ever visited. Although her motives are unknown to myself as the researcher and the other members of the group, it certainly was very encouraging to see that she enjoyed the photo-making process and she made a distinct choice to stay relevant to our collaboration despite her distance from us. I emphasized from the beginning to all of the participants that they could leave the project at any time, that this was meant to benefit their lives in some way, something to look forward to, and that could be their own unique creations. This was a story of their lives, told through their experiences on camera and catalogued for the entire group to view and look back upon one day.

Thus, the participants in this study demonstrated the efficacy of the caregiver model forwarded by the nuns of the Hogar and their dedication to instilling strong value systems of hard work, spiritual engagement, and pursuit of education. This trifecta is what propelled the majority of the participants to succeed and surmount the considerable obstacles that began for many of them in early childhood. The two girls that did appear to go back and live with family members in more rural areas made a choice to remain connected and active and continue to explore the world and seek opportunity. Patricia's major health setback was able to be managed because a few of the volunteers at the Hogar enabled her to access outside help. Her expensive year-plus-long treatment was paid for by an American sponsor. Patricia's life thread was ultimately lost due to her stay in a rehabilitation facility, but her participation at first in this study was significant.

## Identity

As formerly mentioned, the young girls who persisted with and even went beyond the bounds of the confines of the study seemed to truly utilize and enjoy their artistic practice the most. They plugged into the collaborative community and may have even needed the support system more than the others. In fact, the two girls that left the Hogar to go live close to their university, Veronica and Anahi, ended up posting the least. As their lives became more entrenched in college life, perhaps their time became even more constrained and their need to be on social media somewhat waned. Unlike Rosa, Angie, Elena, and Maria, these two participants did not create Facebook profiles, and when the project duration finished, they ceased posting all together.

This point concerning the nature of the individuals' reasons for seeking and exploring their identity through art remains partially a mystery to me. This was an exercise in art making to begin with, and later it became more about crafting one's narrative on a social media platform. I use the word "craft" here because, from my observations over the 16-month time period, many of the participants seemed to drift toward the idea of cultivating an online identity. The online world is vast, and it can become addictive for some because it can be an avenue to portraying a less-than-honest life. I felt that if I avoided teaching the girls too much about social media and focused more on the actual artwork they produced, emphasizing that Instagram, Facebook, and Tumblr were merely modes of communication among ourselves, then they would keep true to the project aims.

In order to revisit these aims, one must first take a bird's eye view of the entire compilation of each girl's photos and from there assess the gains from such a project. The essence of this project began with the intention of giving the girls the power to author their stories. Essentially, they created a voice for themselves via photo-art making and then they shared that voice with each other and with me as the principal researcher. It

would be naïve to believe that the participants would leave well enough alone and cease using these avenues of communication and modes of creating identity once the project's duration ended.

Steiner-Adler (2014) cites her colleague, JoAnne Deake's work, "Strudel Theory, how the layering of nature, nurture, life experience, and the time to integrate and consolidate it all is unique and critical to every child" (p. 159). This point is particularly interesting when considering the context of this study and the way the children of the Hogar had been raised by the nuns. Thus, the introduction of technology is one that is delicate and was undertaken with the intent that the girls would be learning skills and engaging in art making that would allow them to record their histories and share their stories with the outside world while also maintaining their integrity and not abusing this outlet. Many studies in North America and Europe have pointed to the detriment of technology and the Internet upon adolescents' lives. It could even be posited that in light of some studies, maybe the reason adolescents and young adults abuse such outlets is because they have too much time on their hands.

The data this study yielded pointed to just the opposite of what most studies have yielded in this arena. Technology and social media supported the aims of this study because it allowed the girls to become their own data-collectors and opened up a window for us as observers to see rarely viewed scenes. The investigation was multilayered, one that began with the educative goals of art. Could offering an art-making community provide support for young, impoverished, orphaned, Latina females who are aging out of their orphanage? In light of each girl's case study, that question becomes much more difficult to answer, and as this is a highly specified population, the eight participants and their output had to be justified.

The girls I was able to meet with multiple times expressed deep satisfaction with the study and its intent. They all loved being creative and the exposure to the educative goals of art making. They uniformly stated that they wished to be a part of something



vaster, and they all had substantial curiosity about the outside world and the implications of being a part of something larger than their somewhat insular community, though, in fact, the most astonishing commonality amongst all eight girls was that they all expressed hopes of never leaving Peru. They aspired only to live either within the fanciest of districts, which is called Miraflores in Lima, or simply to go back and live where they were born. Not one participant ever expressed a wish to leave their country or even to stray very far from their original communities.

In some way, using art to test boundaries and to broaden skillsets seemed the loftiest of goals at the onset of the project, but those aspirations did indeed expand as time went by. The participants' fear of the outside became less intense, as evidenced by their increasing use of divergent imagery (by this I mean they collectively relied less upon the themes I assigned and began to imagine their own themes and create unique subject matter that reflected moments in their lives that they wished always to remember). Clear aesthetic choices were made, which showed deliberation and advanced learning in artistic abilities they had no previous experience practicing.

### **Six Emergent Themes**

The involvement of the nuns in this work was indeed a happy surprise. It further supported my observation that the nuns at this Hogar were very open to the outside world and to effectuating change. Although they were acutely aware that the girls who chose to go to university or vocational school would most likely not follow in their footsteps and train to become nuns themselves, they still encouraged the route of academia because they knew that it was the best way for the girls to get ahead in life. The second interview with Mother Alexandrina was when I learned the most about her fear for the future of the Hogar. There were no girls currently in training to take over, there seemed to be no plan in place, and she was very aware of the fact that young people were “different” now and

less inclined to work as hard. She spoke about this point prolifically each time I met with her—the changing of the times and the effect upon the younger generation’s priorities.

Although each girl’s trajectory became fairly different when analyzing the girls’ work overall, the six key elements that emerged were identity, personal pride, curiosity, exploration, connectivity, importance of family and community whilst displaying staunch loyalty (to family members, to one another and, in many cases, staunch loyalty to the nuns, the Hogar community, and their faith most of all). I can confidently state that every single participant was deeply religious and very vocal about it, some more than others, of course, but the devotion to a higher power was tremendously imbibed within the girls, and this was proven time and time again in the work they produced. As noted in Veronica’s case study, her images were primarily based around religious themes and sayings. Perhaps her desire to be a nun was channeled through a differing route; she could express her inner feelings and desires through art, but had to take a firmly different stance in her studies, as she was expected to educate herself and be responsible in some part for her family.

When interpreting the data, observation was my main form of studying my subjects. Our best mode of communication was via our photographs and videos; as a researcher, this of course brings up many questions of ethics, mostly that of respecting the girls’ privacy. Social media is, in fact, the opposite of privacy; it is exposure, and not just exposure to me as a researcher and academic, but also to the outside world and the full global community. Between the nuns and myself, we operated as sort of watchdogs on the media outlets, leaving comments, giving feedback to one another, and “liking” each other’s photos. There was a constant reminder that they were being watched on some level. I do not believe they felt censored in any way because of this; they demonstrated supreme ease with the nuns and their peers, and this dynamic did, in fact, help maintain the study’s endurance.

The interviews were extremely helpful in establishing the project, providing context for each participant, and allowing them to verbally express how they were feeling about the process, their evolving lives, and their relationships as they changed and deepened with one another in many ways. Of course, it was also important to know how they felt about me as a researcher. Was I providing them with enough direction and follow-through, and did they derive enjoyment from the activities? This last point was somewhat hard to gauge because, in many ways, the girls did view me as somewhat of an outsider, a foreigner, living a very different life from theirs. I was one who had more freedoms, in a sense, and resources to travel and pursue higher education at institutes that it seemed hard for them to even truly fathom. Researchers such as Holstein and Gubrium (1995, as cited by Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) assert that “in knowing ‘others’ we come to know ‘ourselves’ and thus urged researchers to be reflexive not only about what the interview accomplishes but also how the interview is accomplished, thereby uncovering ways in which we go about creating a text” (p. 116). This is an important point to consider for this project because the primary emergent theme was that of building relationships that expanded outside of their familiar world.

This concept of knowing oneself and, through that, knowing others is not necessarily a new one or particularly revolutionary, but it does highlight a theory of image and what image means in the increasingly global society in which we are all linked, regardless of race, color, class, gender, religion, or country of origin. Social media has essentially created a much more interconnected world where privacy is something that is not necessarily desired by most people. If one chooses to live their life privately, then of course they can do that, and certainly there are many communist countries that ban social media altogether, but for the most part, in this current era, a majority of people are on a social media site on some level and are OK with putting their lives online for viewership. Voyeurism is almost routine these days, with most of us casually taking part

in scrolling through the pictures, thoughts, and activities of other people's lives through a variety of social media platforms that continue to change and expand as time goes by.

### **Overview**

A final point to be noted here is that to find a community where there had been absolutely no exposure to technology was astonishing at first. The fact that the Hogar had no Internet and that the girls had never formed an email address was a surprise for most of the volunteers involved. The head, Madre Alexandrina, had access in her private office, she had created a simple webpage for the orphanage, and she did have an email address. However, it was not until much later that she really began to expand on these endeavors. Whether or not the girls and nuns, with their newly learned picture-taking skills and social media posts, had anything to do with her Internet undertakings is hard to determine. The only real observation I can substantiate is that the Hogar has managed to reach a broader audience, there seem to be more volunteers there (mostly foreign from what I can see from the pictures), and the head Madre does routinely post updates and pictures to her website.

Mother Ofelia regularly messages me through Facebook and shares photos of herself and the girls. She keeps me in the loop, so to speak, and the open-ended communication has been a great help to the project and its aim of community engagement through art making and support. Restated, the primary goal of the study was to first train the older girls on the devices and show them how to navigate social media. The hope was that they would then mentor the younger girls and help them when they needed it. It was happenstance that Mother Ofelia took such an interest in the project and thus became the glue that held everyone together. She was the study's biggest advocate, and her enthusiasm and appreciation for what we were doing as a group infected the entire Hogar. More nuns joined social media, numerous other young girls asked to be part of the

project, and the work continued to build momentum from there and endures to this present day.

Thus, the initial question of whether or not this program would be a sustainable one was definitively answered. It did maintain its momentum for most of the girls to varying degrees, and, in fact, it branched out into directions that were entirely unforeseen. The building of an aesthetic and what that encompassed evolved somewhat later. The first phase was laying the foundation of the project and then teaching the girls how to create their own visions and narratives and how they might be selective in their creative endeavors. When I visited the participants at various time intervals, it was truly a marvel to look back at their Instagram pages and see together the story they had built. Their histories were there, they had captured defining moments and memories in their lives and could refer back to them whenever they felt like it, they could see how they had progressed, what had changed, and what had stayed the same, and they had created accountability, not just to themselves, but to one another.

The overwhelming fear they expressed at the beginning of the project was substantial and not without merit. Patricia could not have been prepared for what the coming years had in store for her; the abrupt disappearance of Elena and Maria was confusing for the nuns and girls because they never could get a clear explanation as to why they decided to leave and more than likely decided not to pursue higher education. Veronica's anxiety about choosing a profession that might not suit her was relieved somewhat as she progressed in her studies, and it seems she made peace with her decision to work hard and study in a field that might one day bring her financial security. Yovany made a few attempts to leave the Hogar, she expressed extreme dissatisfaction living among others and feverishly desired to secure her own apartment and job, yet thus far, she has not been successful in her endeavors and she is back at the Hogar with Angie and Rosa. Anahi still visits the Hogar because her younger sister resides there, but she seems to be thriving in her life at the university and working hard toward her degree. The

trajectories of the participants' lives informed their case studies tremendously and demonstrated that photo art making can indeed be an extremely effective way to narrate one's life, while also evolving into an outlet of sorts. Yet, the culmination of this study cannot truly end, as the project is still maintaining itself to some degree currently.

### **Participatory Observation**

My role as the researcher was one that was emphasized from the very beginning, as I began this project with the intent to immerse myself as much as possible in the daily lives and routines of the participants, teachers, and nuns. In order to create fuller background stories for each person, I had to first understand how they functioned as a society and the arc of their trajectories in life. Their attitudes and values were so shaped by their environments, and, though most of the girls expressed the desire to succeed in life and gain independence, some of their actions were contrary to this, especially in the case of Patricia. As a neutral observer and researcher, one of the most important factors is to not become emotionally attached or involved with one's participants. If I intervened in any way, then it could cause an effect that could be inappropriate or overstepping boundaries in the researcher's duties. Often the girls directly asked me for help, emotional support, and advice, and I responded in the best way I knew how; I tried to maintain a healthy distance but also be a positive influence and role model in whatever various forms that took.

The most worrisome component of this project was the fear that Madre Alexandrina voiced about the sustainable future of the Hogar:

Right now we have 93 girls, there are less because there are fewer nuns, there are 15 less girls because we don't have many nuns that help. That is why the kids all must help the nuns.

I then asked: "What happened to the nuns? Why are there less?" She replied:

Some of them were young and they decided not to continue. We are very worried because we cannot accept many girls when there are so few nuns, we have to have the right amount of nuns and girls so that they get the proper attention.

PR: And fewer and fewer young girls want to take that responsibility?

A: Yes, all over the world it is like that. Families now have fewer kids and so in the world there are fewer vocations for the Church so the nuns have this problem now. The life style of a nun or a religious father/priest is very demanding, it is a big commitment, it is a life commitment, it is not like I am a teacher or a doctor or something like that. It is a huge commitment so there are few people who will make a choice like that.

PR: So there are fewer priests too?

A: Yes, of course. In this era, the families are smaller and all over Peru and all over the world. There are less children and less willing to join the religious sect and perform such duties.

PR: So if they cannot accept some girls, what happens to them?

A: The girls that are at the orphanage currently may stay but we are not accepting new ones. For example, the optimal number is 80 or 85 girls because we only have four nuns only so we have to keep that number in the near future, as a consequence, the girls for example who are leaving the school from the fifth grade, they will have no replacements.

Conversations like this were quite frequent and alarming: to ponder the fate of my participants did bring its stresses of course.

In terms of my own art practice, since I was a participant as well and was forced to revisit my own aesthetic vision and the choices behind my work as a collaborator, I certainly evolved along with my participants. My postings became less frequent but were derivative of much more meaning and creative nuances. When one becomes increasingly picky in their decisions over what to share, a more authentic voice appears. Essentially, I started to pay attention more to my surroundings, and what exactly I wished to convey to my audience (which was primarily comprised of the nuns and participants since my Instagram account is set to private).

Mother Alexandrina exhibited great concern over my endeavors with the girls and often asked me questions regarding what I perceived to be as their “successes” in the project. Her questions were not always easy to answer. Here is a snippet from one of our last interviews:

A: Do you think that the girls in the project have changed in a way? Do you see that their work is good or see that they have evolved in some way in their communicative skills?

PR: So for me, I see a lot of things with these girls. I am sort of mentoring them from afar and keeping track of their work. And they need a lot of direction, especially in the beginning and if I am not monitoring, sometimes I get really busy and I don't post pictures myself or videos and sometimes I have to take a break because I work a lot and I have two children, so if I am not giving them the direction that they need and attention that they need and deserve then they kind of stop posting as much.

PR: I think that they are seeking some sort of validation in their work and in what they are doing with their lives. And that they are looking for a role model or something like that. So I hope that I am serving the purpose to show them something constructive. I am in school, I work, I have kids, I consider myself to be a strong, hard working female and I am trying to show through my art and my life narrative, something positive. The other thing that I have found is that this project can not just be just one year. It is going to have to last for at least a year and a half it is going to go longer than I expected because the girls need more time to develop.

A: I am also worried about the girls who are studying at the university, maybe they don't have time to post or make videos because they are studying? Are they following your guidelines and committing the time necessary?

PR: The girls that have remained in the project have consistently reiterated their commitment to this and that they want to continue and make the time for our work together. So far, no issues with these particular girls.

A: I have talked to the girls many times about this and told them that if they commit to this project then they have to find the time so that they can do the things right. Sometimes they have to sacrifice things that they like to fulfill their commitment.

PR: That is true.....but what about the other two girls, that left? Do you know anything about their whereabouts or what they are doing?



A: Marie Elizet, she didn't want to keep the scholarship here, Elena is the poorest of the girls but she needed a lot of help and her brothers and sisters told her that they were going to help her so that she could go with her family, so she did not apply for the scholarship, so she missed the scholarship. Now, I do not know anything about her, she does not keep in touch with us.

Mother Alexandrina demonstrated in this instance and in many others that she was truly invested in the underworking of our collaborative work and was there to assist at any time. She did her best to provide as much information as possible on the participants and the day-to-day activities at the Hogar. Many things were, of course, out of her control, and her mild manners were helpful; she did not interfere in any way with our work, but she wanted only to be apprised of how it was going and how the girls were responding to such a novel project.

### **Authenticity**

The primary source of data collection began and ended with each subject. As far as authenticity goes, the photos represented in their narratives seemed to collaborate the information that I gathered during their interviews and my time spent at the Hogar and with the nuns. There was a beginning to this study, but the end is nowhere in sight, really, because we are all now connected through social media and can potentially track one another's lives into longevity.

This is a heavy notion to consider when, at the start of this study, there was so much uncertainty about variable factors concerning the viability of running such a lengthy project and entrusting young girls with relatively big responsibilities and commitments to something other than school, their rapidly expanding future, or their families and friends. As every girl but one continues to utilize social media as a form of expression and discovery, it is apparent that they have stepped into the digital age and are now very much a part of a broader global dialogue. Subsequently, the manner in which

they continue to build their self-identities and reflect upon how their photo-making journals have abetted the integration of the many changes within their experiences over the course of study.

The entire experience has endless possibilities: the meditative and shared process where young people were creating art side by side; using art to communicate what they were feeling, while generating storylines that they could look back upon and clearly see patterns of behavior. There was significant intent behind their decision-making and a trajectory trend that most seemed proud to share with one another. The potentials of experience with intent, purpose, self-reflection, and accountability are all what these narratives revealed over the course of the 16 months.

The helplessness that the tragedies around the world imbibe in us, the surreal chaos that surrounds us is assuaged by “encounters” with great art (Greene, 2003), though this is just one goal of art education and aesthetic education. This study sought to answer quite a few questions, and the only viable way to satisfy this query was to employ technology in such a way that actual art making and storytelling were enhanced by providing technological devices and social media platforms to share such work. Memories, consistent contact, connectivity, and social engagement were just a few of the ways we were able to maintain the continuity of the project work and remain linked to one another in our endeavors.

Our process of co-learning and narrative contributions deepened as time went by. For all intent and purposes, technology and social media are what made this study happen, though the work was focused on some primary themes and the time the subjects spent on their devices was restricted. As previously mentioned, the looming reason that their time was limited was primarily due to their stringent work and school schedules, so when they did take the time to work on their narratives and pictures, their missions were hyper-focused and had actual end goals.

The nuns that participated, whether through their time and energy or their welcoming of strangers into their lives and abodes, may certainly have come as a surprise to some. Yet, there exist some incredible examples of nuns who go above and beyond what they might perceive as their call to duty. Extraordinary efforts advanced in education and the arts may not be as rare as some might think. Sister Corita Kent, born in Iowa in 1918, was an exemplary woman who dedicated a large portion of her life to art education, participation, and the pursuit of an astonishingly successful art practice of her own. Her work within the communities she served was of particular interest, especially when considering the era in which she was living (Rose, 2015).

The era that we are living in now is one of great uncertainty. Mother Alexandrina demonstrated her many grave concerns about the future through her interviews in various capacities, although she kept true to her optimism and hope in God. She, along with the other nuns, believes fervently that her cause will be provided for by a higher being and that the work she does is for the advancement of humanity. She was a woman born and raised in an environment she now controls. From my observations and numerous talks with her and the other nuns, they seem resigned to the fact that maybe none of their young wards will go through the arduous training they undertook when they signed their lives over to the Church. They are open to the idea that maybe training some of the older girls to take their place and perhaps run the Hogar as a nonprofit may be the only option. Mother Alexandrina has a set of skills that supersede her religious devotions; she is a business woman and clearly understands the value of education, cultural connectivity, and the impact of the outside world. As more and more foreigners travel from all over the world to volunteer their time and spend moments with the children of the Hogar, she too will have to expand her perspective and accept that many of her volunteers do not share her ideals about the Catholic Church. Many of the institutions she receives help from are secular, and although her community is based around Catholic ideology, the children of

the Hogar are now being increasingly exposed to other ideas, religions, thoughts, and ideas.

### **Summary**

This chapter incorporated the themes and sub-indicators of such themes within the context of this dissertation study. Through the integration of the literature and a thorough examination of the work produced by the subjects, the findings of this study were revealed. Primarily the questions that were asked concerning the welfare of the eight subjects after they left their place of residence were answered by their shared photo-art making narratives and a self-created and self-sustaining community was built through via the continuous art-making enterprise that was undertaken.

Aesthetic education and the support of collaborative art making did, in fact, reveal quite a substantial amount of information about each girl, and most of the girls continue to rely upon the programs this study set up to remain in contact with myself as the principal researcher, the nuns and teachers of the Hogar, and their peers. The identity formation of the participants increasingly began to set them apart from the Hogar and increasingly layered stories of both singular and collective identities of these young women emerged.

## Chapter VI

### EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

“Art is often said to be morally neutral.” (Arnheim, 1992)

#### **Introduction**

Chapter IV gave us a greater understanding of the participants’ personal backgrounds and how they navigated the events and changing landscapes of their lives; Chapter V analyzed themes within the girls’ work and what evolved out of our collaborative efforts over the course of 16 months. This chapter will explore further the implications of advancing an art practice initiative at the Hogar while also tying in the idea that the spiritual education the girls received in conjunction with their upbringing did, in fact, have a very strong impact upon their lives and, I would even argue, enhanced their educative goals and value systems. This chapter sets forth the educational implications of the study in its entirety, the value of the Participatory Observation Model used for this dissertation, and suggestions for implementing art educative and case study research at the Hogar.

#### **The Significance of Art Education for Underserved Communities**

To address the educational implications of this study, we must first look at the role of art education in children’s lives. Judith Burton (2004) writes that “young people

inevitably work within the forms of their cultural realities as transmitted by teachers, parents and artists; yet it is their curiosity about and personal experiences of this world that drive their artistic practice and gives it personal resonance” (p. 1).

Yet, some may contend that art and aesthetic education are not fundamental needs of orphanages that struggle to feed their residents and provide them with basic, clean living conditions and health care. I would argue that the experience of an art practice motivates individuals in differing ways and encourages many to seek, discover, and even feel less afraid of a world that can be so daunting. The case studies and the resulting photo narratives of the eight participants and two nuns demonstrated that there is still much to learn from children and adolescents living within institutionalized care homes. They also call attention to the idea that collaborative art making has the capability of bridging communities and generating dialogues concerning issues that are hidden or relatively unknown to general society.

Burton’s (2004) notion that a “facilitating environment—in the form of parents, siblings, peers, teachers and the larger culture” as “intervening to impact artistic growth” (p. 16) —can transfer over into the environment of an orphanage such as the Hogar that is receptive to creative growth and imaginative projects that grow the children’s spirits and mind. Though they have had very little experience with a consistent arts practice, the children I personally have worked with in subsequent visits to the project site have shown very visible excitement to continue to develop their artistic skills. When I ran workshops there and integrated all of the children at the orphanage, the children and young people there exhibited remarkable enthusiasm and extensively painted and photographed themes that related to their culture and demonstrated great pride in the landscape of their country and traditions. Art education allows children to forge deeper connections to their cultural backgrounds and motivates their self-expression in ways that other subjects cannot.

Maxine Greene (1995) expounds upon the nature of one’s “freedom of articulation” (p. 34). This is an ideal, of course, that every child, every person for that

matter, should have the right to express himself or herself in some way. We are all uniquely creative beings—especially as children, who are less inhibited, less brainwashed by society to act a certain way or censor themselves for the sake of societal proprieties. Greene writes, “It demands imaginative action many times for teachers to realize that youngsters who see different (who have been reared in poverty or come from distant places) have something to say about the way things might be if they were otherwise” (p. 34). This point directly speaks to the participants of this study: eight girls who live relatively far from a city (Lima proper is over an hour away from Puente Piedra and not easy to get to) and might have gone unnoticed by greater society, their own people, and the governing bodies of their home country. Instead, the large majority have forged distinct paths for themselves and have chosen to help one another along the way while sharing their life narratives through photos and videos on the designated social media platforms.

Burton (1994) eloquently asks and answers the question, “Why is art important in the lives of children and adolescents, what is it about artistry that so captivates the human mind and why the culture would be better served with arts fully integrated in the curricula of schools?” (p. 477). Her question is one that extends to all school education, and it is applicable to this study because, in my experience, art curricula do not exist in most orphanages. The initial research questions of this study ponder whether an art practice would benefit the participants of the Hogar, and the data generated show that most did gain a multitude of skills in photo making and technology, and the majority continued their practice even after the 16 months ended. Burton argues “that not all children will become artists” necessarily; “they nonetheless need to find ways of reflecting on, organizing and speaking to their experiences of being in the world, and they all need to find ways of integrating and of grounding their own organizations within the continuum of the culture in which they live” (p. 482). In light of this, the aims of this dissertation were, in fact, to contribute in some way to the participants and nuns “connections that

link self to world” while “open[ing] doors to never-before-comprehended versions of shared human living” (p. 482). Yet, even as the project continues for the nuns and most of the participants, there are issues of sustainability that must be addressed.

### **Foreseeable Issues in Sustainability and the Uncertain Future of the Hogar**

The matter of language barriers when creating the initial dialogue has been brought to focus, not just in Peru, but in other project sites as well. Most of the volunteers that work within my organization do not speak Spanish. Thus, the opening dialogue that begins a lesson plan where the teacher and students exchange ideas and grow concepts can be somewhat tricky. Personally, I have found ways to overcome such obstacles, and a solid art educative lesson plan that is translated and well-executed can unfold as long as communication is clear and one is able to make the effort to try to learn basic words and other modes of engaging.

Burton (2004) advances the notion of what she terms the “motivational dialogue,” which “should create a situation that engages youngster’s interests and curiosities and provokes them to reach beyond what they already know and can do” (p. 98). This exchange is, in fact, integral to commencing a lesson plan that students feel comfortable executing and that allows them to coauthor during the initial back and forth of the preliminary project plan and goals. This can be achieved when there are dialectic barriers or one can utilize interpreters, but if there are no interpreters available, then one can use hand language, pay attention to body signals, and be extra-sensitive to any signs of confusion or distress in the students if they seem unclear about what is expected of them and, above all, have the ability to reassure. There is no universal method of teaching art, there are only suggestions, yet underserved communities such as Puente Piedra benefit tremendously through learning from teaching artists, even when the dialogue becomes an issue. In the ten years or so of working with volunteers from all different backgrounds



and countries, I have not experienced a problem with communicating project goals and executing a well-rounded and cohesive lesson plan.

The course of this study has opened just a small window into a community that has largely been closed off to the rest of society because of their numerous challenges, such as installing and sustaining Internet service, purchasing the right computer equipment, and employing teachers that are up to date on technology. As a dialogue has commenced here, there is an opportunity to learn more about orphan caregiver models, after care, mentoring, and other such support systems for children and adolescents who reside within institutionalized care homes. The practice of art is one that I have contended to be essential to a child's holistic education and to their spiritual growth. Self-expression is one's supreme connection to oneself and others, discovering and exploring one's most intimate thoughts and emotions, and learning new skill sets that can enhance the numerous facets of an individual's life.

### **Spirituality**

There is true resilience and bravery that all eight of the participants exhibited time and time again throughout the course of the 16 months. They have displayed astonishing loyalty to one another and to their families, despite the fact that many of them were left at the door of the Hogar by their very own relatives. They are not hardened by their circumstances in any way, and the struggles they face seem to have only strengthened most of the girls and made them realize that change can come in all forms, both good and bad. It is my belief that as they have articulated their aesthetic—with a clear point of origin and possessing little to no background knowledge of art, photo making, technology, or social media—an enormous amount of co-learning took place for the participants, the nuns, and myself as the principal researcher. Greene (1995) speaks about the spontaneity that is lost as we age, a quality we have as children, but that lessens as we

develop into adults, yet this quality has not been lost to Mother Ofelia or Mother Alexandrina; their photos show inner joy and outer gratitude. Their needs are very little, they ask for nothing, they refuse to beg for donations or help because they believe so firmly in divine providence. It is an interesting attitude to observe and to learn from, especially when coming from a first world country such as America.

The eight participants are all clearly on the cusp of young adulthood, girls who are teetering between two drastically different worlds as they enter into real life and take on responsibilities of their looming futures. Identity formation becomes all the more troubling for such girls because of their conflict with their familial homes. Most of them have siblings in the Hogar that they clearly feel protective of, there are reminders of their early childhood everywhere, the questions of how they came to be at the Hogar, whether it was due to the loss of a parent like Anahi, or basic abandonment in Rosa's case because of her family's extreme poverty. Some of the girls really do not even know exactly why they were left at the orphanage, their memories are hazy, or the stories that they have been told might have been less than truthful.

These aspects, coupled with the normal growing pains of adolescence, did create doubt for some of the participants regarding the work they were required to undertake in order to surpass certain obstacles. Yet, there was an overriding realization that, on some level, they were being upheld to the highest value system, one that speaks to the idea of community engagement as serving the holistic good of all, and this unilaterally left them with a sense of comfort.

In the work I have done over the years in numerous project sites, all have differed in many ways, but with one unifying theme, which is enduring faith in a higher power. This is a quality I believe can be linked to higher achievement in children raised with spiritual connection. I have had countless conversations with orphaned children and nuns in Panama, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and, of course, Peru, which all circle back to their belief in something greater, that they are being protected by a higher power.

The nuns who work with underserved communities and populations are usually from a sect that takes vows that obligate them to such arduous physical, mental, and emotional work in their service to the people.

Greene (1995) writes, “There are always survivals from the past; there are always pressures; there is a certain weight in the lived situation. We achieve freedom through confrontation with and partial surpassing of such weight and determinacy” (p. 52). The determinacy of this community to stay together while welcoming outsiders and foreigners into their realm facilitated the aims of this dissertation all the more because they were open to new experiences and truly desired an implemented art education program.

Again, the most prominent and resounding themes in the work of the nuns and participants was their deep spirituality. Of course, they were all deeply Catholic and believed reverently in a higher power, but they also displayed profound connections to the earth, nature, and one another; their faith was one of optimism and joyfulness. The overriding positivistic outlook that was shared by the majority was truly contagious.

Lisa Miller (2015) defines spirituality as:

an inner sense of relationship to a higher power that is loving and guiding. The word we give to this higher power might be God, nature, spirit, the universe, the creator, or other words that represent a divine presence. But the important point is that spirituality encompasses our relationship and dialogue with this higher presence. (p. 25)

The Peruvian orphanage is not the first work site where I have seen this type of devotion and subsequent happiness derived from the simplest of pleasures. They are content, the children and nuns ask for very little, just one’s company and participation. Their value systems are rooted within their faith, their spirituality, and love for one another. I believe there are direct links between harboring such strong faith and the influence it has had on the participants as they aged out of the orphanage and entered a very scary and tumultuous adult, outside world where their only protection was their learned wherewithal and belief in a higher purpose.

I have seen this across the board in nearly every orphanage I have worked within; the stronger the presence of the nuns in the lives of the children, the more well organized and well behaved the children are. This is another area that needs attention, as the links I have found are substantial and could help shape future policies of orphanages that are not run by faith-based organizations. If some mode of spirituality were introduced in government-operated institutions, such as meditation or breathing connectedness, outcomes that are more positivistic would surely follow for those that live in some of the most deplorable conditions.

Miller (2015) points out that “religion is a valuable context but not a prerequisite for developing the language of ritual and symbolism.” She writes about the power of the arts and the “universal themes of love, conflict, suffering, and healing,” all of which are “inherently spiritual and invite us to bring those discussions into the conversation of the day” (p. 168). Although this advice seems to be directed toward the “normalized” household, the Hogar could be considered a type of family home and her advice is, in fact, being played out in an orphanage far from the Western world. Miller goes on to describe spirituality as a “connection with the world apart from the purely physical, the transcendent realm. The field of love, dreams and mystical experience, and the use of ritual and symbolism are all ways that children (and adults) experience the ineffable” (p. 168). I would agree that it is not just religion that keeps so many of the children from leading errant lives; it is also their worship of all that is good in the universe, their recognition of what they do have and not what they do not have, along with their mutual respect and harmonious living patterns that preserve the innocence and integrity of “Hogares de Ninas” in Peru.

### **Participant Observation Model**

From the onset of my master's thesis work and the eventual formation of my nonprofit, "Aurelius for the Arts," I have relied upon the Participant-Observation Model for data collection. I have immersed myself in diverse communities and have found that the most simple of acts can accommodate art making. This means rearranging tables, sometimes bringing in storage bins or putting up makeshift shelves where clearly labeled boxes can be placed and art supplies can be easily accessed. The making of space is essential to welcoming an art practice and beginning a new experience with materials that most of the kids have never worked with. After the area is created for purposes of introducing an art educative lesson plan and the children are familiarized with the materials and concepts, an authentic dialogue can begin and our collaborative artistic endeavors become a truly effective way of communicating and co-learning.

Jorgensen (1989) points out that the evidence collected from a participatory observation study must have reliability and validity within its findings. He notes,

The participant observer rarely depends on a single form of evidence. Concepts are formulated and checked by multiple procedures and forms of evidence, such as direct experience and observation, different forms of interviews, and different informants, artifacts, and documents. (p. 37)

In relation to these suggestions, as the principal researcher, I exercised such advice by interviewing the girls in different spaces other than just at the Hogar, going on little adventures with them in Lima, spending time with the staff and teachers at the Hogar, and running small art projects with the rest of the kids when there was extra time.

There was a general feeling among some of the older girls who were aging out of the orphanage that they were left out of the project, and this was a difficult aspect to address. I did depend on the nuns and Angie and Rosa to pick the girls who they felt would be best suited for the aims of this dissertation. I wanted to be as objective as possible and involve the initial two participants in the process of choosing the rest of the girls, since they essentially became the main mentors on the project and my most reliable

source of data. This mode of research has led me down many paths concerning the welfare of females in particular because, as noted in the literature review, there is a great disparity in the way females are treated versus males in Latin American society.

There are much fewer males that are abandoned to start with, and a majority of the orphanages I have worked with are comprised solely of girls because they are usually considered more of a burden upon the family, with less promising work opportunities. It was interesting to see the nuns at the Peruvian Hogar attempting to combat this somewhat prevalent attitude. As noted in the case studies, many of the participants did choose to go to the university, opting for degrees they considered to be profit-producing. This would mean that they could one day support themselves and any extended family. They did not decide to take courses that were esoteric in nature or that might in any way impede their chances of being part of an industry in Peru that had growth potential. They were all acutely aware of the importance of a vocation; I garnered these facts from spending copious amounts of time at the project site, speaking to their peers and educators, and conversing with anyone that would offer me time and more information concerning how their society functioned.

In a sense, being a female has granted me greater access to the communities I have visited, and I believe it has put my participants at ease when sharing intimate details of their ongoing lives and family histories. Unfortunately, there has been very little research thus far on the specific topic of female orphans versus male orphans. It is difficult to access statistics, and in some communities, it is quite murky territory when one attempts to further examine the origin of children who have been completely abandoned and left in orphanages strictly as babies or left in “birthing houses” where woman can go and give birth and then sign over their rights. The reason this is such a tricky subject is due to corruption and cover-ups. Because the adoption process is next to impossible in most Latin American countries (particularly Peru, where you must be a Peruvian citizen to

adopt a Peruvian orphan) and closed off to foreigners, I have personally witnessed drastic measures taken to circumnavigate the system.

This is a road that would be filled with obstacles for an outsider of these types of communities. Coming from first world countries, Americans, Europeans, and Canadians (who are the top countries that adopt) are pretty much clueless about the inner workings of “adoption” and often get ripped off by sham adoption agencies, crooked lawyers, and other such products of a system that is so utterly flawed and poisoned. It is one of the major frustrations of nearly every nun that I have met that there exist so few avenues for finding real family homes for abandoned children. This is a huge topic of interest that has tremendous potential to be further studied, but, as emphasized before, it is very hard to investigate matters such as these if one is a foreigner to the community.

The participant observation component of this project was particularly important to keeping the flow consistent and engaging. Jorgensen (1989) states:

What is taken to be the problem for participant research by participant observation is the result of a flexible, open-ended, ongoing research process of identifying, clarifying, negotiating, refining, and elaborating precisely what will be studied. Early research efforts should be concentrated on gaining access to appropriate situations for observation, gathering information, and even analyzing results. (pp. 32-33)

The process of research that Jorgensen speaks of, the preliminary stages, is crucial in building trust-based relationships that allow the participatory study to authentically take place. Preliminary efforts must be about access: creating a situation where those that are being studied, observed, analyzed, and who are generating data will feel a sense of ease. For purposes of this dissertation study, the eight participants and two nuns served as their own data collectors, and the Participatory Observation Model thus addressed idea of fluidity in the initial problem statements.

Jorgensen (1989) goes on to highlight the danger the researcher faces as one “becomes immersed in the setting and overwhelmed by what transpires there” (p. 33). As I became absorbed month by month more thoroughly in the lives of the girls, my

perspective did indeed change, the fruition of my work at times became more aimed at the individual's story rather than the collaborative story. Based on the videos and images of each girl coupled with the images provided by the nuns, a very broad scenario emerged of life at the Hogar from all ten of the participants in this study. Their lives were harmonious and in synchronization, and, despite their ongoing problems, it appears that society honestly could learn quite a bit from such a community.

Although I did feel compelled to further study the everyday phenomenon of life at the Hogar, the sense of purpose and direction remained the same throughout. This direction was oriented toward bringing not just the participants, but also the entire orphanage into a sort of digital era, where projects such as the one I implemented, and others that followed, could be more suitably sustained.

Jorgensen (1989) speaks about the data of participant observation as taking the form of "qualitative definitions and descriptions," whereas the formulation of concepts is "based on the insider's perspective, participant observers seek out multiple indications (or indicators) of what an idea means, including how it is used" (p. 34). The shape of this dissertation study followed the themes generated from the output of the participants' artwork; there was no true quantitative aspect to this study because of the various forms of qualitative evidence uncovered in further understanding the life narratives of the girls and the functioning of the Hogar. The interviews, dialogues, observations, and analysis of the girls' artwork painted an overall picture of one particular community and the outcome of eight young lives. This model of research is one that is uniquely suited to studying communities like Puente Piedra if one is willing to follow their customs, rules, and routines. It is also due to their acceptance of foreigners and their welcoming of the outside world's help and influence upon the children and young girls that reside there, that the role of the participant-researcher is made that much easier. Therefore, the educational implications of developing further relations with this community would be optimal due to their openness and desire to be a larger part of a larger global community.



### **Identity Building and Cross Cultural Implications**

Kroger (2004) brings up a salient question regarding cultural diversity and the experience of identity building in adolescents. Is “the adolescent separation-individuation process a phenomenon found across cultural contexts?” (p. 83). She cites a few studies that suggest there are variations in the process of identity formation and separation from parents and family. In the case of the Hogar, this would mean separation from the participants’ orphanage; because they each had to endure very early childhood separation from their parents, their cases are unique ones and all the more layered. Kroger goes on to state, “Much needs to be explored regarding child-rearing ecologies and their relationship optimal adjustment during adolescent and adulthood” (p. 83). Of course, optimal adjustment in any young person’s case would be a secure home life with both parents present and educated enough to understand the various transitions adolescents go through. As far as institutionalized care home models, the Peruvian Hogar is the best that I have seen, as it tries to replicate a familial environment as much as possible while also facilitating relationships between the girls and their extended family members. The nuns, staff, and teachers all do their best to provide an optimal environment for all the girls, but they are increasingly strained in every way possible. The caregiver model they utilize is one that has potential to be replicated in other orphanages, and this is yet another field of study that needs attention.

I can honestly say that each girl that took part in this study had experienced some sort of early childhood trauma, coupled with the emotional trauma of being left in a group home and the rarity of visits from family (if their family is even still alive), which caused them all great anxiety. There does not seem to be one clear solution as to how to address matters such as these; psychologically the girls receive limited assistance, but the nuns have many children they must provide emotional, spiritual, monetary, educational, and health support services to, and they are overextended. This is another arena that needs to

be addressed: the establishment of clear funding sources that are consistent and sustainable and perhaps building a model of care based more on the idea of an NGO or a nonprofit.

The reason I state this is, as I have highlighted in nearly every chapter, the model of the Hogar is not one that is supportable. There are problems with funding sources, there is no government aid available, and they are dependent upon inconsistent donors. The significance of this study points out these problems within a system that is firmly positioned around the Church, yet the belief that there will be nuns to replace the ones that currently operate the orphanage and community school and center is not exactly accurate.

There was certainly the worry that some of the participants harbored that they might one day repeat the mistakes of their parents, and the dialectic nature of our discourse allowed the girls to reveal much about their inner feelings, fears, and their desire to avoid such fates. They all yearned to achieve on some level and to bring pride to their family and also to the nuns. The mentorship aspect of this project is another element that could be examined as the girls who are aging out of the orphanage do seek out opportunities to grow and need guidance during such a delicate time.

### **The Significance of Personal Expression and Establishing an Aesthetic**

Personal expression is an integral part of the human experience. When circling back to the initial research questions regarding the implementation of a collaborative art educative project with a population that is aging out of their institutionalized care homes, one can see a clear need for young people to have an outlet of expression. Dewey (1934) describes the act of expression as a sort of impulsion: “It is the movement of the organism in its entirety, impulsion is the initial stage of any complete experience. Observations of children discovers many specialized reactions” (p. 58). Children and

young people are driven by self-expressive needs; expression and spontaneity are hardwired into their nature, as Greene (1995) has emphasized regarding imagination. Dewey (1934) links our human compulsions with the ideals of a “civilized” existence, stating:

On the lower scale, air and food materials are such things; on the higher, tools, whether the pen of the writer or the anvil of the blacksmith, utensils, and furnishings, property, friends and institutions—all supports and sustenance without which a civilized life cannot be. The need that is manifest in the urgent impulsions that demand completion through what environment—and it alone—can supply, is a dynamic acknowledgment of this dependence of the self for wholeness upon its surroundings. (p. 59)

A significant portion of this dissertation was to forge a stronger understanding of how a community operating against such odds would receive a completely foreign and new experience. As I initially concentrated on one single age group, again, I was surprised at how eager the nuns were to join in on the experience. They too needed an outlet of expression; their journeys are rarely seen by the public because Catholic nuns are usually regarded by society as somewhat limiting in their worldviews and even somewhat intimidating. In fact, the opposite was revealed in my investigation, and the implications for education and further research in this genre are vast. Most of the nuns I have worked with want to be a part of the global world, but they simply do not have the tools to lead them there.

Thus, the act of expression, the impulsion as Dewey would call it, is one that is cross-generational, and in many ways art can be a healing process, a comfort and reprieve from the routines and monotony of certain life paths. Arnheim (1992) writes about the arts as being “an effective means of exploring and caring for the human mind,” as “relief” can be found in “some artistic activity” (p. 164).

Just as the adolescent participants in this study experienced childhood trauma on varying levels, which Kroger (2004) would describe as “a strong push towards expression in character” in order that they may “come to terms with trauma” (p. 65), the nuns too

must face ordeals of their own on a daily basis while maintaining consistently optimistic attitudes and bringing great comfort to so many young girls. It was revealed very early on in Madre Ofelia's case that she wished to be a part of this project and to learn more about the world around her and narrate her adventures, her routines, and her vocation. This was a healing journey for her in many ways, and her enthusiasm is what ultimately convinced many of the other nuns to try out social media and photo making. As unexpected as this outcome was, she sincerely became the motivating force behind our 16 months together. Madre Ofelia held us all accountable (and still does to this day), and she created a cohesiveness that might have been lacking otherwise.

### **Summary**

Such a discipline is not an unwarranted imposition. Anybody who has observed young children spending long periods of time on some challenging piece of construction or deconstruction knows that there is no end to patience, once the goal is sufficiently attractive. (Arnheim, 1992, p. 33)

This chapter brought to light a multitude of issues for ongoing research and educational implications of what was yielded from this 16-month endeavor. Yet, the dearth of existing studies and literature on subjects such as aftercare in orphan life, cross-cultural art education within institutionalized care homes, and the role of religion and positivistic outcomes for the population studied, is a substantial issue. The implications of this study were to open up multitudinous and novel perspectives and to use art as an avenue for establishing identity building mechanisms that could be supported through an art making community.

The significance of self-expression, imagination, and exploration was addressed in this chapter, as well as the educational implications for sustaining such programs in underserved communities, schools, and orphanages like the Hogar. The ideas brought forth in Chapter V were expounded upon in terms of their relation to what this

dissertation's value is to art education and how the model of research employed could potentially be further studied in other aspects of art educative initiatives that could be viably sustained in the foreseeable future.

## Chapter VII

### CONCLUSION

This 16-month longitudinal study began with a vision of creating a collaborative photo art making and video art practice with just eight participants. This vision broadened as the teachers and nuns of the orphanage began to become more involved with the process of photo art making and narrative storytelling via their unique personal practice. Because of the length of the study and the location of the project site, many unexpected events took place in the lives of the participants, most of which were documented through their photos, videos, interviews, personal conversations, Skyping, emailing, and observational journaling. Essentially, as a participatory observer in this study, I was able to witness many transformations over the course of time, while teaching the girls how to build personal aesthetics and utilize social media as a platform so that we could all share our experiences from afar.

Restated here, the problem is based on how these eight young women in a secluded society constructed fresh identities as they formed new lives outside of the Hogar, whether it was within the university or in some other form. Art then became a sort of formative tool in which they were able to self-reflect and construct their new identities. In many ways, as the principal researcher, I learned much more from the participants than they did from me. I can say with assurance that this community is joyous in nature and incredibly optimistic despite numerous obstacles and living conditions that most would consider subpar. The Hogar is overloaded with abandoned children, truly at its capacity,

and because of the paucity of monetary support, currently they can no longer receive children.

This study was intended to provide a system of support through art making while simultaneously learning about what happens to young girls who are leaving their orphanage. Where do they go? What choices do they make and what influences their decisions? Initially, I was skeptical about whether my subjects would have the ability to endure the length of such an endeavor and maintain enthusiasm for a plan that would take time, energy, and forethought while asking them to also communicate intimate details of their backgrounds and their ongoing, present-day struggles.

It is necessary in this final summation to revisit the two main research questions here. *Given that adolescents who have been living in orphanages most of their lives face uncertainties that are compounded by the fact that they must in due course launch out into the world when they come of age, society knows very little about what constitutes this experience for them due to a significant gap in research and literature on this topic.* This study aimed to address this topic directly and provide research on the life choices of this specified population, while also gaining insights into how the orphanage functioned on a day-to-day basis. The primary subject raised in this study concerned the idea of providing a collaborative art-making community to support the eight adolescents as they were leaving their community at the Hogar and what we could further learn from their shared art experience.

Naturally the question arises of “Why art?” in such an instance, why was this route chosen to reach the aims of this dissertation. Simply put art provides an expressive medium through which young people can reflect upon themselves and find an expression for their own identities. Through the giving and exchanging of the artwork an interchange is achieved of a collective identity. These are tools for thinking about something that is critical in the lives of adolescents on the verge of forging new chapters in their lives. The data of the dissertation revealed that these eight young women in making their journey

into adult lives were constructing new identities not only singular identities but they were also constructing a collective identity with each other. What is important in this study is that the arts, mainly photography, played a critical roll in helping these young women formulate and reflect on their senses of growing selves and also provided a media through which they could exchange and build important collaborations that would sustain them into the future.

The six themes addressed in the participants' work were as follows: community building via art making, community engagement, reflection on self-identity, the proposed effectiveness of cross-cultural art education, shared experience, and effectiveness of a participatory community research framework for this study. To answer the questions posited, the starting point was one that was somewhat complex because so many unknowns remained. Most of the participants were able to care for their computers, follow instructions, and create cohesive storylines during their transitory periods in life. The girls that dropped out of the study (excepting Patricia) at least continued to generate data so that we could all collectively track them and communicate with our shared art.

Immersing myself in their community, participating in Hogar events, and extending art lesson plans to the other children aided this study as well because I could be more inclusive in my work there and observe the other children in their natural setting. I trust that the goals of answering the above questions were satisfied to a large extent, but there is still much that can be done to learn more about this population and perhaps one day implement an art program there for all of the children to enjoy while further reinforcing the idea that the arts can provide a collaborative community that supports identity formation outside and apart from the Hogar.



### **Envisioning a Future of Art Education within the Hogar**

Further ideas of one day creating a space where the girls can exercise their creative skills and have art lessons on a semi-regular basis are currently being explored. The nuns and staff welcome the idea, and plans are being put in place to make this happen, although it will take time, money, and great collaborative efforts on many people's parts. I believe building an art institution on the Hogar's premises is a very real possibility and the next step in keeping the work I undertook there as sustainable, progressing, and relevant.

The land surrounding the Hogar is enormous, but full of trash that they burn in the back near the children's quarters. The area where they keep the animals (mostly pigs and chickens) is very unsanitary, the main kitchen is falling apart, there is very little greenery for a garden, and all of the existing structures, especially the younger girls' dorm rooms and the library, need complete renovations. Running water is only available once in the morning and once at night for an hour, and they just received a donation for hot water heaters in the dorms of the youngest of children (before, there were freezing cold showers for all). The structure that could potentially become an art studio space would need a complete overhaul, but it does have an indoor/outdoor component and it is large enough to fit many children and create numerous workstations and projects.

Subsequent art making ventures since my study have been well received by the Hogar, such as collaborative mural painting and the creation of an instrument installation made from found objects and trash located on the project site. Basic art lesson plans were implemented with the other groups of kids simultaneously when I was teaching my preliminary photo making and social media art lesson plan, and these initiatives were enthusiastically embraced. Finally, attached in the appendix of this dissertation is the letter from the head Madre expressing her desire for an art education program there, with

pictures of the structure where it could feasibly be developed, and pictures of some other art education lesson plans that were realized at the Hogar.

However, the reliability of locating an actual art teacher from the community is very slim. Puente Piedra is many miles outside Lima, and the commute is a grueling one, filled with constant traffic, no real laws regarding driving, unsafe neighborhoods, corrupt law enforcement officers, and severe pollution and sanitary issues. The Hogar does not currently have the funds to pay for such a place, so money would have to be raised overseas for the most part, and the initiative would have to be consistent; a partnership between the Hogar and a scholarly institution or NGO would most likely be the best fit. Teaching artists would stay on the premises of the Hogar, where all provisions would be provided for them and they would be cautioned not to venture too far outside the school because of the relative unsafe nature of the barrios. These issues aside, the security at the Hogar is well maintained and the nuns have a distinct reputation there because they provide the surrounding community with food services, parenting classes, church gatherings, and small fundraisers. They have secure concrete walls surrounding the premises and a gatekeeper that guards the Hogar seven days a week.

In the appendix to the study is an idea for a technological app that could potentially be developed to connect future volunteers to orphanages, overseas schools, and project sites. This is a component of the E-learning aspect that made this project possible and could further assist in sustainability efforts. I have also attached photos of a potential structure at the Peruvian Hogar that could host art education workshops and seminars. There is great potential here to further an art educative program that could be sustained by teaching artists and students who wish to do a residency program or internship. This objective may be a way for places like the Hogar in this study to keep their programs running more consistently and remain connected to a larger pool of educators, researchers, and volunteers that can aid in their mission of serving children and young adults who are most in need.

## Summary

Beyond the photo-narratives that were generated out of this study, researchers, academics, and educators can clearly see that a sort of kinship evolved and continues to change course over time. Arnheim (1992) eloquently writes about the healing nature of art, “as a helper in times of trouble, as a means of understanding the conditions of human existence and of facing frightening aspects of those conditions, as the creation of a meaningful order offering a refuge from the unmanageable confusion of the outer reality—these most welcome aids are grasped by people in distress” (p. 170). Such words are powerful when considered in the context of this study and its outcome. There was true gratitude among the participants to have a mix of new self-expression tools that kept them connected to one another and a community that subsisted throughout the changes in the lives and continues to sustain itself to this very day.

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## Appendix A

## Sample Interview Questions: Participants

*Do you know what social media is? Do you currently have a Facebook or Instagram page?*

*Have you ever used a camera or video recorder before?*

*What type of feelings does art making bring out in you? How do you feel about video journaling and photographing images from your day-to-day events?*

*Have you planned ahead for certain events in your life?*

*Where do you most want to live? What do you most want to do with your life?*

*Will you keep in touch with your peers? The nuns?*

*What are your biggest fears about leaving your school and residence?*

*How involved is your family with your decision-making?*

*What resources has your school provided for you as you prepare to leave?*

*How has this experience making art affected your life and perspective?*

*What most inspires and motivates you?*

*Are you currently in touch with any of your peers that have left the school and if so, do you know what they are doing in their lives?*

*What do you think of this collaborative project that we are doing together?*

*Do the nuns stay in touch with most of the girls?*

*Are there some girls that fail to leave and thus must have another year or so stay over in the orphanage?*

## Appendix B

## Sample Interview Questions: Two Madres

**Head Nun Questionnaire Alejandrina**

*What order are you from?*

*When did you enter the congregation?*

*How long have you presided over the school?*

*How many nuns work at this school?*

*Have any recent former students become nuns after they left?*

*How do the girls get here? Where are the children's parents?*

*When was the orphanage built and by whom?*

*Do you have many volunteers here?*

*How does this school serve the outside community?*

*How many children?*

*How many children have to leave?*

*Will some try to attend the University?*

*Where do children go that must leave after their stay is up at the orphanage?*

*Do you stay in touch with them?*

*As you already know I want to do a project with the 7 girls that you pick for me that you believe will be the most responsible and responsive to this project, do you think that a collaborative art project will work for these girls? Do you think they will keep up with the responsibility of filming their lives?*

*Do you think art can enhance their lives? What is the value in a project such as this?*

*Do students have an art teacher right now?*

**Ofelia Interview (Second Head Nun)**

*What is your full name and age?*

*How long have you lived/worked here?*

*Where are you from?*

*How does the orphanage serve the outside community?*

*How do you feel about the fact that the girls have to leave this school and how do you feel about the fear they have surrounding this?*

*How does the school support the girls when they must leave?*

*Do you see many volunteers here? If so, where do they come from?*

*What do you think about the art projects that we are doing?*

*Do you think art is important for children and if so, why?*

*What do you think/feel about doing a video art collaborative project with me and the other 8 girls from the school/orphanage?*

*Will you be a part of it and will you follow the themes that are assigned?*

*Do you keep in touch with the girls when they leave?*

*Do you find that the girls are largely successful? What happens to them when they leave? Can you give some examples of girl's stories?*

*How long do you plan to be at this school?*

## Appendix C

## Consent Form in English

Dear Sir or Madam:

My Name is **S.M. Alejandrina Ayala Montoya** and I am the head of the orphanage called **Hogar de niñas Nuestra Señora de la Misericordia** located in Puente Piedra, Peru, home to approximately 120 girls. I hereby give Tara Ashmore Driver full permission to work with the B participants that have been chosen for her Doctoral project at Teachers College Columbia University. I also give her and her team of volunteers permission to teach art to all of the children residing at Hogar de niñas Nuestra Señora de la Misericordia and to film their projects, lesson plans, and interviews in their entirety.

Should anyone have any questions or concerns or would like to contact me directly, please email me at: [alamomisionera@gmail.com](mailto:alamomisionera@gmail.com) Or call me at 00-51-15-501-033



*Alejandrina A*  
**S.M. Alejandrina Ayala-Montoya**

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014



## Appendix D

### Lesson Plan

Day 1.) Show examples of work/films (Pluralplus)

Day 2.) Teach the girls how to use the video on phone and how to take photos, download Instagram and Tumblr on each girl's device and train them how to use each program

Day 3.) Exercise #1 break girls up into groups of two and have them interview each other about their biggest fears in leaving the orphanage and show them how to post interviews to Tumblr

Homework- Starting Day 3 through the last day, 1min recording when they wake up, 1 min recording before bed everyday. After we leave, recording every week.

Day 4.) Show and tell--not just share their work but talk about their decisions and also answer any questions and discuss technical problems.

Day 5.) Exercise #2 speed recording. Collage 10-second clips of 30 unrelated topics using Instagram video editing app

Day 8.) Reflect on what is learned and assign topics and point of interests for the year to come

Day 9.) Interview girls and continue to get comfortable with the cameras, editing, posting to Blog (Tumblr) and sharing ideas etc.

Day 10.) Wrap up of lesson plan and answer any lingering questions

#### **Tasks (Lesson Plan Specifics)**

1. Translate each lesson plan into Spanish before class begins.
2. Explain narrative segment of the project.
3. Let the girls familiarize themselves with the camera, video, and program devices before beginning and give a brief tutorial.
4. Train one or two older girls to assist in this project.
5. Introduce Instagram.
6. Get used to using Instagram and posting photos.

7. Show short video DVD from Plural Plus so that students have a point of reference and can possibly draw some inspiration.
8. Teach the girls how to use the phone videos, basics of recording and editing photos with filters and the like.
9. Issue homework, which is to have the girls record video and take photographs based on themes that I assign them.
10. Introduce Tumblr.
11. Teach girls briefly how to interview for their own narratives.
12. Have the girls interview each other for one minute about their worst fears in leaving the orphanage and then teach them how to post their first interviews on Tumblr.
13. Work on recordings, editing and photo journals.
14. Interview each girl about their lives and about this project.
15. Start posting as a unit.
16. Explain what is expected of them after we leave.
17. Start to establish an ongoing dialogue.
18. Keep in close contact with the girls through out the year's time, arrange for more visits and interviews.
19. Compile all the girls' images, ongoing analysis of images and create a shared storyline for the year that we are together.

## Appendix E

### Mobile App. Development Plan

#### **Themes**

Nature and surroundings and environment

Amazon (5 of them) record these days away as in depth as possible, portraying day-to-day life, family culture, relationships and a sustainable narrative of their lives outside the orphanage and in their homes and original environments.

When back, they should post about their school life and every week the theme changes.

#### **Example Themes**

Friendship

Family

Living quarters/space

Educational life

Hobbies

Art-work

Build upon list from here

Appendix F

Photos from the Hogar, Puente Piedra, Peru



Potential space for art education -- interior



Potential space for art education -- interior



Potential space for art education -- interior



Potential space for art education -- exterior



Madre Alexandrina



The Hogar



Participant Rosa receiving her Samsung device



Resident children of the Hogar showing their art work



A resident of the Hogar involved in a painting mural project



Tara Callen with five of the participants in the study