Zine Is Believing:  
The Personal Growth Of Five Contributors To A Youth Magazine

Miss Mieke  
B.Ed., University of Saskatchewan, 1994

Thesis Submitted In Partial Fulfillment Of  
The Requirements For The Degree Of  
Master Of Education  
in  
Educational Counselling

The University Of Northern British Columbia  
March 2006

© Miss Mieke, 2006
NOTICE:  The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.
ABSTRACT

Zines are small circulation, self-published, non-professional, low-budget collections of original and/or appropriated material in the form of articles, poetry, art, and musings. Zines are essentially underground publications of self-expression.

This research explores the individual experiences of five youth who were contributing members of a long running youth group zine and how this experience has influenced their subsequent lives.

Through the use of open-ended, in-person, telephone and email interviews, supplemented by participant art and written work at the time, individual experiences were analyzed and compared. Two main categories were identified through these comparisons. *Internal nurturing* which helped develop confidence and a sense of community, and *external impacts* of the zine work that included improved relationships with peers and adults as well as influencing the direction of participants’ ensuing lives.

All of the participants were between the ages of 14 and 22 during their involvement with the group zine.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ABSTRACT**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**LIST OF TABLES**

**LIST OF FIGURES**

**LIST OF FIGURES**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW 1

- Definition and Origin of Zines 3
- The Connection Between the Schactto Youth Centre and Mined Minds 5
- Personal Connection to the Research 6
- Structure of the Project 10

II. LITERATURE REVIEW 12

- Existing Literature 12
- Contribution of this Project 16

III. PROCESS OF INQUIRY 18

- Method 18
- Researcher as Instrument 20
- Location in Time and Place 23
- Participant Selection 24
- Selection Criteria 26
- Participant Characteristics 27
- Research Interviews 28
- Data Analysis 29
- Ethical Considerations 33

IV. INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS 37

- Fish 37
- jj 41
- Dayton 44
- Dice 46
- Raine 48
- Summary 50

V. A BRIGHT LIGHT AT A DARK TIME: THE ZINE AS INTERNALLY NURTURING 51

- Participant Involvement In The Zine 51
- How they first heard about Mined Minds 51
- The Role of the Youth Centre 54
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Participant Characteristics 27
### LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reformatted Collaborated Zine Page #1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mission Statement</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Divider Page</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Alternate Zine Formats</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>First <em>Mined Minds</em> Recruitment Poster</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reformatted Collaborated Zine Page #2</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Reconstructed Collaborated Zine Page #3</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fish's Recruitment Poster</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Collage Depicting “Meeting Place and Supplies Needed To Produce Zine”</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Collage To Question “What Comes To Mind When You Think About Zines”</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>My Internal Processing</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Words are sacred. They deserve respect.
If you get the right words, in the right order, you can nudge the world a little.
Tom Stoppard

I have been nudged. A hearty thank you goes out to all those, too many to name, who have encouraged, supported and nurtured my mind, body and spirit. Without such a strong and supportive group of friends and family I would not have completed an undergraduate degree much less a graduate degree.

This piece of work belongs in part to the now adults that I have interviewed for this thesis. Without their contribution, this paper would have been impossible. It is a privilege to have been able to be a part of their process as these five contributors; jj, Fish, Dayton, Dice and Raine recall their experiences with the youth zine. Many thanks go out to the many youth, young adults, front line workers and the youth centres I have been involved with who may not have directly contributed to this paper, but who did contribute to my own experiences and understanding of zines, zine culture and youth work.

I can’t thank Libby, Jimmi, and my “Northern Buddies” enough for their editing and technical skills. There is a saying that “it takes a whole community to raise a child”. I daresay, it takes a whole community to raise a thesis as well. Without the support of my examining committee and in particular my thesis supervisor, Judith Lapadat, I am convinced I would not have tackled a thesis. My sister recalls a conversation we had following my Qualitative Analysis in Education class. After talking about some of the options when doing qualitative research I proclaimed, “I think I can do this after all”.

This work is the result of an analytical style, a topic of interest, a great support team, a reflective group of individuals and a passion all coming together in a way I had only hoped was possible.
I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

"The ocean is made of drops"
Mother Teresa

The word “zine” (pronounced zeen) is a shortening of the word “magazine” and refers to small press, independently published, small scale circulating material comprising a variety of original and appropriated text and images. Zines are most often distributed through word of mouth or mail order and can be liberal, conservative, weekly, monthly, professional or recreational (Farrelly, 2001). A sample page has been reformatted and recreated using original material with the permission of four of the five authors and artists who participated in this study (see Figure 1).

Zines are considered by those who are aware of them, have contributed to them and who read them, to be a valuable means of self-expression. As such, some academics and practitioners have proposed that zines may be an effective and alternative tool of therapy, assisting people in connecting with and expressing their thoughts and feelings. Putting on paper one’s feelings, thoughts, ideas, and experiences, whether real or imagined, can be a liberating experience (Ellis, 1999). An additional therapeutic value of zines may lie in their unique ability to assist in relationship building.

All individuals have within themselves the ability to guide their own lives in a manner that is both personally satisfying and socially constructive. In a particular type of helping relationship, we free the individuals to find their inner wisdom and confidence and they will make increasingly healthier and more constructive choices. (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1989, p. xiv)
Figure 1. Reformatted Collaborated Zine Page #1

"I wish I had known."

We are broken together
Open and closed up
The body yours down
Tendons occasions
The possession of bodies
The conquest of souls

IF YOU NEVER TRIED
ANYTHING NEW, YOU
WOULDN'T BE.

DEATH, SILENCE SODER
FORBIDDEN PASSIONS REVEALED
BLACK MILDS INTO WHITE
* Jennifer Jones
(written early March 2001)

THE END

Don't ask me your questions
Then give me your answers
And me his
Then ask me
And me to the
And me to the
And me to the
And me to the
And me to the
And me to the
And me to the
And me to the
And me to the
And me to the

I've never been to think
To think to think
To think to think
To think to think
To think to think
To think to think
To think to think
To think to think
To think to think
To think to think
To think to think

Words you can count on.
Smells you can taste.
Aspects of relationship building that may be fostered by participating in a zine project may include continued engagement in collaborative projects, self-expression and identification of bothersome issues, the development of allies, and the formation of bonds of trust and solidarity.

In this thesis, I elicited individual narratives from participants of *Mined Minds*¹, a Schactto² youth zine. The purpose of the research was to identify the main themes in individual narratives and reoccurring themes across narratives to provide personal insights into the ways in which working on the zine had an impact on the individuals’ self. I subdivided these themes into two main categories under which subheading will later be discussed. The two main categories are the *internal nurturing* that occurred in intrapersonal areas such as confidence and feeling like one isn’t alone, and *external impacts*, which I identify as by-products from the zine work on the outside world such as changed interpersonal relationships and directions taken in future work.

*Definition and Origin of Zines*

There are a wide variety of definitions for “zines”. Most broadly, zines have been defined by Gunderloy as “anything published on a non-commercial basis” (1988, p. 86). In this project, I have used Duncombe’s more narrow definition, that, “zines are non-commercial, non-professional, small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish, and distribute by themselves” (1997, p. 6).

---

¹ To protect the privacy of the participants, I have used the title “Mined Minds” in place of the actual name of the group zine that participants worked on.

² To protect the privacy of participants, I have used a fictional name in place of the community name where *Mined Minds* is based.
Zines gained notoriety in the 1930's as an alternative to mainstream publications in the United States, although they may have been around in the form of poetry chapbooks, and perhaps religious and political leaflets in previous centuries (J. C. Lapadat, personal communication, March 2005). These small-circulation magazines provided commentaries and served as an outlet to share short stories, particularly of the science fiction genre (Duncombe, 1997). In the 1970's, zines were used as a format to endorse and celebrate music, bands and performances (Stoneman, 2001). Since then, the focus and topics of zines have expanded and now include literature and commentary in, among others, the following areas: girl zines, queer zines, comix, spiritual zines, political zines, and literary zines (Block & Carlip, 1998). Although the history of zines spans more than ninety years, zines remain a little known and underground medium for self-expression. Zine topics continue to be as varied as those who are creating and producing them. Many zines are created, written, produced and distributed by only one person. In addition there are zines where a primary editor, writer, and distributor welcomes and incorporates submissions from others who may share a common interest in the theme of his/her zine or who may provide an alternate and challenging viewpoint for the readership (Eichhorn, 1996).

Generally speaking, zines can be subcategorized into main groups. "Genzines", or general magazines, are the small press equivalent to professional magazines, containing a collection of editorials, letter columns, and articles on assorted subjects of interest. "Perzines," or personal magazines, have a more relaxed format, sometimes using comics or other pictorials to provide a visual account of the life events, thoughts, and feelings of the writer (Gunderloy, 1988). In the last ten years, with household,
school and library access to the internet, zines, once published and produced on paper have now gone online and on the world wide web. Blogs (a contraction of the word “Weblog”), which began as regular online journaling, and E-Zines, the electronic version of the zine, are allowing individuals the opportunity to publish as regularly, uncensored and cheaply in ways that the zine allows.

The Connection Between the Schaactto Youth Centre and Mined Minds

Mined Minds, a zine produced, published and distributed by youth for youth, began in 1995 in the town of Schaactto, British Columbia. From the start, the funding for Mined Minds has been sporadic. Originally, Mined Minds began with the assistance of a street-involved youth named Red from Vancouver, who had been working on a zine called Forage. Red's passion was to start zines in other cities (C. Hair, personal communication, October 16, 2003). It is unknown why he chose the community of Schaactto but, with the support of the local non-profit Youth Centre, Red and C. Hair (a youth outreach worker), began advertising and educating youth on creating and writing about things that were important to them. The ball began rolling when C. Hair, wrote a proposal to solicit funding for a photocopying budget and a stipend to contributors.

Although Red died of a drug overdose before the first issue was produced, his impact and influence lives on. Today, the production of Mined Minds continues, albeit sporadically and unpredictably. For the youth who participate, their shared interest in producing this zine brings an opportunity to express their interests, observations, concerns and opinions through writing and art. It also, as their own stories illustrate, allows them the opportunity to develop and explore valuable relationships.

To protect the privacy of participants I have used pseudonyms in place of the real names of all participants and individuals mentioned throughout this text.
Personal Connection to the Research

My interest in the research is multifaceted. About twelve years ago, having gained an awareness of zines through a friend and having acquired a teaching degree, I saw zines as a valuable teaching tool. When I moved to Memoir, Nunavut Territory, I worked at a community centre with individuals who were homeless, recently discharged from jail, or high school dropouts, as well as with people with mental illnesses. I engaged these participants in the project of making a group zine and observed that this experience had positive effects on self-esteem and team building. It also provided a space for otherwise silenced community members to have a voice.

My interest in the benefits of zines continued and I soon began working on the creation, production and distribution of my own perzine, which continues to this day. The benefit that I get from writing and sharing my own stories, thoughts, and ideas provides me with a fulfilling mode of personal expression and makes me feel part of a larger community of independent writers.

Moving from Memoir to Schactto, BC, I became a youth outreach worker for high-risk youth*4. I was both surprised and pleased that one of my job responsibilities in the Youth Centre was to promote, inspire, and assist in the production of Mined Minds. It soon became obvious that while I was familiar with zines, I was unfamiliar with the character and role of this particular zine, a group zine produced and edited by a wide range of local youth, many of whom submitted their material but did not necessarily assist with the production or distribution of the zine. I have included the mission statement of the zine, found at the beginning of each issue since inception (see Figure 2).

*4 According to the mandate of the Schactto Youth Center, youth between the ages of 13 to 29 years who were experiencing emotional, behavioral, family, developmental and/or social dysfunction.
Figure 2. Mission Statement

Mission Statement

Timed Reaction is a magazine for youth. It is written by youth and addresses issues that affect youth. Any issue, opinion, value or attitude expressed within these pages are only that of the author. We do not censor any valid opinion, though we will not print any opinion that is simply racist, sexist or homo-phobic. This is not an avenue for division nor one of hate-mongering. We are aware that many of the views and opinions expressed within these pages do not necessarily reflect those of all youth. If you disagree with any opinion, write to us stating your view and reason for it. We will permit as many of these rebuttals as our space and philosophy permit. The underlying notion is to exchange viewpoints, and to explore alternate sides to any issue, and thus to hopefully learn and grow. We don't expect to solve every issue, nor do we wish to. But, by seeing and exploring different ideas and opinions we become more aware of different attitudes and values. No attitude, opinion or value is necessarily right or wrong—just different. Accepting differences leads to growth for both the individual and the community. Thus, we believe that every person has the right to be heard. We believe that every person is different and that opinions, views, information and education are to be shared. We respect personal and cultural differences and promote positive growth and change on a personal and societal level. Our aims are to foster change, growth, awareness, maturation, motivation, respect, caring and encouragement. We will attempt to educate disseminate information, support ideas, exchange viewpoints and increase awareness as well as offer alternatives, support mechanisms, experience and alternative avenues of expression. We believe this magazine belongs to the youth of this community and as such if you want to see something in it that you wish wasn't, then tell us.
The zine was divided into two sections, the first section being filled with youth contributions and the second section having advertisements promoting local youth based services and organizations. I have included an example of the division page between the two, with the written permission of the artist (see Figure 3). Among other unique attributes, the zine was under the rubric of the Government of British Columbia's Ministry of Children and Families, and it received sufficient funding to pay contributors and to ensure its distribution to all youth in and around the Schactto area. As the worker affiliated with the zine, which was run from the local Youth Centre, I learned that there were often disgruntled parents and/or concerned community members and teachers who were not appreciative of the “colourful” words and foul yet expressive language which the youth chose to use. As the program leader responsible for this program, I was at times reprimanded for material that the youth were submitting and the expressions and experiences that they were sharing through the free distribution of the zine.

I consider zines to be a tool that can be employed with diverse groups. Sharing thoughts and ideas whether pleasant, unpleasant, real or imagined through zines has, both at a personal and professional level, demonstrated to me that the voice of zinesters is a valuable resource and tool. Further research into this method may provide guidance, insight and support for zine projects in other locations, which can be used by youth workers, Youth Centres and for concerned and caring parents and caregivers to give credence for supporting zines and the voice of the zinester.

Eisner (1991) in *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice*, states that the purpose of study is to “expand perception and enlarge understanding” (p. 114). My own perception and understandings about the
The following services and organizations do not necessarily reflect any or all views and opinions expressed in this magazine. Thank you. Thank you very much.

"FOR THOSE WHO DON'T LISTEN TO ELVIS:

The following services and organizations in no way reflect or necessarily support the views and opinions expressed within this 'zine!"
impact of group participation in the production of group zines are only assumptions, founded from an insider's perspective. By researching, interviewing, and collecting the storied memories of youth and young adults once involved with *Mined Minds*, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the zinesters (those who write and contribute to zines), involved with *Mined Minds* and insight into how participants viewed their involvement with the group zine *Mined Minds*.

Having completed the required course work for a Masters of Educational Counselling degree and having a vested interest and years of professional and para-professional experience in the field of Mental Health, I am curious about the possible personal and therapeutic benefits for youth who have contributed and been involved with the production and/or distribution of *Mined Minds*. In particular, I am interested in how zinesters reflect on their personal growth, development and consciousness through the act of working with a group of youth to create, share and distribute their thoughts and experiences, both real and imagined.

*Structure of the Project*

In the next chapter, I review the handful of academic works written on zines. These works have tended to survey a broad range of zines in one place and time, rather than focusing on one particular zine and its contributors over an extended period of time. Following the literature review, Chapter three focuses on the process of inquiry, describing the research epistemology and research methods, including the criteria used for participant selection, the interview questions and the method for data analysis. Presentation of the research findings takes place in chapters four through six, beginning with an introduction to the participants. Using snippets of the participants’ storied
narratives throughout these chapters, I will use writings, drawings and quotes to illustrate their points made. The paper concludes with a discussion of the relevance of the findings for myself, and my reaction to the learning and perspectives I have obtained through the researching and writing of this paper. I also discuss the relevance of the findings for the participants and staff of the Schactto Youth Centre, the future of *Mined Minds*, and for future academic research. I conclude with a discussion of my changing and changed views on zines and their importance to the therapeutic process and to personal development.
II. LITERATURE REVIEW

"Words set things in motion. I’ve seen them doing it. Words set up atmospheres, electric fields, charges”.
Toni Cade Bambara (1996)

As noted in the introduction earlier, there are many types of zines, most of which have the potential for therapeutic benefit. This project focuses on “perzines,” that is zines that share the personal writings and innermost thoughts and feelings of the zinesters in the forms of journal entries, poems, commentary, collages, and short stories (Block & Carlip, 1998). This chapter explores the research that has already been conducted on zines and the role that this project will serve in the wider body of academic literature.

Existing Literature

There are books available on the topic of zine making and design, as well as independent workshops put on by zinesters on the topic of the “how to’s of zinemaking.” However, virtually any medium that can be photocopied, pasted, quoted, drawn, or written and that is a means of personal expression can be put into the self-published pages of a zine (Duncombe, 1997). These compiled books can be folded and stapled a number of ways, some of which I have illustrated (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Alternate Zine Formats
The historical development and political role of zine making has been explored by academia in a small number of works.\(^5\) Those that relate tangentially to this thesis are as follows. *Fanzines: Their Production, Culture and Future* written by Phil Stoneman (2001), explored all types of fanzines specific to one particular topic. Stoneman's thesis sought to create an understanding of the how and why of fanzines: how they came to be and why they continue despite very little awareness of fanzines, particularly music zines, by the broader mainstream public.

The study of zines through the transition from paper to the internet is a current trend in zine-related studies. Frederick A. Wright (2002), in *From Zines to Ezines: Electronic Publishing and The Literary Underground* explores the advancements of literature and, in particular, zines as a result of technological advancements in electronic publishing. Despite the fact that zines are considered underground and qualitatively inferior to contemporary published works of literature, they continue to grow in popularity. Wright suggested that by monitoring the impact of publishing technologies on zines, both on paper and online, predictions can be made regarding future changes in both the more traditional and the alternative publishing world of literature. The ability to self publish and distribute thoughts, opinions and ideas that are contrary to mainstream culture through the use of pen and paper or technology such as the computer may in fact, change what is thought to be mainstream. It will not be possible, or necessary to conform content nor presentation in order to get published. Zinesters are publishing themselves.


---

\(^5\) A search for doctoral dissertations and master's level theses related to zines, completed in over 1,000 North American graduate schools and European universities yielded less than 20 works.
Production of Zines interviews eight zinesters, the new technology that they are using in the production of zines, and the global community of which zinesters become members. Technology, and the ways in which the young women use it to create their zines and their own personal identities, are explored as also being linked to varying levels of personal, cultural, and political struggles.

Laura Konigsberg’s (1999) dissertation, Subverting Girls: Cultural Anxiety and Female Adolescent Sexuality explores the portrayal of female adolescent sexuality in America popular culture throughout a variety of media, including zines. By exploring female popularity and desires, and the ways in which female adolescent sexuality is depicted in all aspects of popular culture, (including film, comedy and historical retellings of fiction and non-fiction), the pervasive nature of female stereotypes are investigated.

Using self determined youth media and communication practices of straight-edge youth, a term used to define youth that are living alcohol and drug free (Marcus, 1989), Mary Pileggi (1998) wrote a dissertation entitled, No Sex, No Drugs, Just Hardcore Rock: Using Bourdieu to Understand Straightedge kids and their practices. Bourdieu has, over the course of his career as a sociologist, studied and theorized patterns of inequality through four quadrants of society. The quadrants Bourdieu identified are: material possessions, cultural knowledge, community networks, and personal identity (Bourdieu, 1984). Using Bourdieu’s concepts of struggle relating to community and identity, Pileggi explores how youth zines provide a social space for self-expression and an exchange of information.
Outside of the classroom, youth are actively engaged in learning, exploring and sharing information and experiences, via informal, self-driven literacy practices. While the value of such involvement is recognized, until Leif Gustavson’s (2002) Zine Wrighting, Graffiti, and Turntablism: The Creative Practices of Three Youth, little was known about how youth become involved in alternate forms of self exploration, including zine writings. Three fifteen year old males from three distinctly varied cultural, racial and social backgrounds were studied in an ethnographic analysis of their involvement in their distinct creative forms of self expression. The yearlong study was performed through interviews, reading personal information, and observing participants, their friends, and their families. The study explored youth expression, cultural and racial influences, and the meaning the youth gave to their own experiences. How youth learn, share, and experience creativity and literacy, and continue them outside of the classroom, challenges educators to recognize the value of all types of learning and methods of self-expression.

In Leslie Haravon’s (1996) dissertation, Gaining Respect: Fat Women and Resistance, zines were looked at in terms of how they provide a vehicle to challenge mainstream cultural stereotypes that fat women are unattractive, lazy, stupid, and lonely. Haravon found that “fat-positive” zines, with a focus of discussing and sharing stories and other materials that promote living full, productive, content lives as fat women, contribute in a positive way to the ways that society views fat women as well as to how fat women view themselves. These zines challenge social and scientific myths.

Zines, as the prior academic works have shown can be created by anyone (man, woman, child, youth or adult), can be done anywhere (urban setting, rural setting, in
isolation or in groups), and can address a variety of topics, from music to body image, sexuality and personal struggles. One thing that remains constant, is, that zines are an opportunity for self-exploration and self-expression. Zines provide a chance for individuals to get in touch with their own thoughts and experiences while at the same time portraying a life, thoughts and ideas that may not have a voice or a venue in mainstream society. There are marginalized groups and individuals, whether they are fat, thin, youth, street-involved, mentally ill, or others who do not feel represented or visible. And yet, zinesters, through self-expression and distribution make a place, demand a space for themselves in both the literary world and the figurative world which allows their experience to be witnessed, to be affirmed. The voice of the individuals through the use of zines, has the potential to rise up, to find and to build community, be that a community of one or a community of hundreds, be that a community of cyber friends and acquaintances or friends in the physical world. Zines provide the space for creating and participating in media and culture is more satisfying and gratifying than merely consuming mass media, corporate, ready-made, one-size-fits-all monoculture (Fish, personal communication, June 2004).

Contribution of this Project

Whether providing alternative thinking for a wider audience, creating opportunities for self expression, building and developing a shared community among readership, or developing networks between authors and distributors, zines and zine-related experiences have only begun to be examined by mainstream society and academia. By reflecting on the shared memories and experiences of multiple contributors to a northern interior British Columbia group youth zine, with this project I aim to fill a
gap in the growing body of work on zines. Although this study is a small one, its value lies in its exploration of the experiences of contributors to a group zine, something that I have not discovered in the research. Whereas Konigsberg’s study (1999) examined common themes among the experience of zinesters, this project records both the recurring themes and the individual experiences of specific zinesters working on a specific group zine, *Mined Minds*.

The methodology used in this thesis also differs from that used in the academic works surveyed. It has been acknowledged that zines can tell a story, share a passion, and empower the creator (Haravon, 1996). Although zines themselves are personal narratives, narrative inquiry has been used as a methodology to gather the storied experiences of zinesters as they reflect on their experiences with zines and the impact that they had on their personal growth and development. This thesis incorporates the methodology of narrative inquiry to help to fill this gap in the current literature.
III. PROCESS OF INQUIRY

"Each person’s life is lived as a series of conversations"
Deborah Tannen (1990)

In this chapter I first explain how I chose narrative inquiry as a methodological framework for this study. Then, participant criteria, basic comparable characteristics of the participants, the interview procedures, the approach to data analysis and ethical considerations are discussed.

**Method**

Narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Josselson & Lieblich, 1995; Mishler, 1986), is a fitting research methodology for this project as it is based in the theory that individuals use, tell, and listen to stories to make sense of, understand, and convey who they are, who they were, and who they will become (Ollersenschaw, 2002). Bruner (1986, 1990) suggests that human beings are natural storytellers, narrating the events (real and perceived) of their lives to themselves and as another way to construct meaning in their lives. In this way, people understand and shape their self-identities and share their cultures (Bruner, 1986, 1990). As it was my intention in this study to gather, analyze, and interpret the stories of the experiences of zinesters as related to *Mined Minds*, I believe that narrative inquiry provides a good methodological match. Storytelling and story listening are interactive processes. It seems appropriate then, that narrative inquiry is the methodology of the study, as participants already have adopted storytelling as a way of understanding the world and their place in it through their contributions to *Mined Minds*. 
Narrative inquiry, as a form of qualitative research, does not reflect an objective truth or an absolute reality. Rather it is based on the belief that reality is a human construct, derived from human sharing, perceptions, and experiences (Mulholland & Wallace, 2003). It is a way of making sense and making meaning through the process that occurs as a result of telling and retelling stories, which in turn can lead to personal growth, reflection, and an increased understanding of events and associations (Oliver, 1998).

The concepts of time and place are important aspects of narrative inquiry. Stories, awareness, and interpretations are time and place dependent. Stories are subject to change with growing insight, and personal growth is affected by the ongoing experience of living. In narratives, past events and experiences are reviewed through the lens of today's perception (Josselson & Leiblich, 1995).

For these reasons and for this particular research, narrative inquiry allowed me to identify, compare, and contrast themes and common metaphors from the participants' experiences of their involvement with Mined Minds as though it happened recently, when, in fact, individual experiences may span a range of a ten-year period. Through the process of recalling, rethinking, and reconnecting events and experiences from the past through storied experiences and memories, events are "restoried," and have an impact on future meanings in a number of ways (Olson, 1995). On one hand, stories shape the meaning of those who are doing the telling. On the other hand, stories influence the listener through the interactive process of listening to the story, comparing with one's own experiences, and appropriating the story teller's metaphors, myths and images (Coles, 1989).
Narrative inquiry includes gathering, documenting, and interpreting storied experiences and memories. Through the telling of and reflection on memories and experiences comes the act of creating understanding.

The researcher is an active member of this process, drawing on memories, feelings and his or her own experiences as a result of hearing the participant’s story. It is important that the researcher’s responses are controlled in that they are not immediate. The first priority is to find the participants and to hear their stories by focusing on their words, metaphors, images, and values. Only later is it the role of the researcher to react, interpret, and identify themes (Cottle, 2002). Through the act of interpretation, the researcher is, in fact, discovering and uncovering his or her own reaction and responses to the stories.

One of the purposes in undertaking this thesis was to satisfy my own curiosity, enhance my personal growth, explore my experience with *Mined Minds*, and shape my future involvement with group zines. I consider zines to be an invaluable tool that can be employed with diverse groups. A stable and consistent presence in the production of *Mined Minds* over the ten years has been a youth worker appointed by the community Youth Centre. The youth worker’s involvement and responsibility to the zine was to provide continuity, support and basic guidance for distribution and recruitment, and to initiate regular meetings. These meetings brought together individuals with both shared and diverse interests, experiences, identities and desires. It is this diversity, and the need for the youth to work together to produce, publish, and distribute a zine, that makes *Mined Minds* an interesting subject matter to me. I was the Schactto Youth Centre youth
worker for more than four years. I was interested in gaining an understanding of the youth experiences with respect to the zine, what stood out for them, how the experience shaped their lives and, to process my own experiences and memories with the youth zine and the youth I worked with during that time.

Due to my continued education in the area of educational counselling, and my growing knowledge of a multitude of theories of what affects people, I wanted to explore healing and self growth further and the effect of using writing, self expression and storytelling as forms for personal growth. Due to my close connection to many components of this study, the Youth Centre, the community, past and present youth workers, Youth Centre staff, the youth, and *Mined Minds* itself, I had to remain receptive and open-minded to the participants whose experiences and memories were different than mine. To maintain open mindedness, I kept in mind a quotation I heard long ago by my grandfather. He said, “everything is true to you” (C. Flynn, personal communication, 1986). I kept this concept in mind when listening to the stories by the participants, everything they were saying, was true to them; it did not have to be true to me, nor true to anyone else. Keeping an awareness as to my own reactions, thoughts and feelings to what the participants were telling me and taking time between process the information shared by the participants helped me to separate my own thoughts and feelings from the stories of the participants. Lather (1993) refers to this as “seeing what frames our seeing”. The focus of this research involved listening to the participants story and the retelling of their stories, and interjecting with my own stories and reactions as researcher as opposed to the goal of hearing or writing a particular story.
Narrative inquiry, a qualitative and interpretative study by the researcher of people’s stories, is anchored in people’s knowledge and memories, of their experiences. This contrasts with the epistemological view of knowledge as an objective truth (Mulholland & Wallace, 2003). As such, researcher subjectivity plays a crucial role in the responsible collection of, restorying and analytical exploration of the shared experiences (Lapadat, 2003). The researcher must remain aware of his or her own perspectives, assumptions, and experiences and how these will influence the process of inquiry. At the same time, he or she needs to be careful not to impose his or her own perspectives, assumptions, and experiences on the participant’s story. Eichelberger (1989) described this attempt to be objective, self aware and detached as “bracketing”.

In narrative inquiry, the researcher and participant’s stories are interconnected, in that the participant’s memories, experiences, thoughts and feelings may be interspersed with the researchers. In this way a larger story, an interwoven, interconnected, historical account of experiences, is retold and restoried by the researcher’s story (Clandinin and Connolly 1991).

Through the process of conducting open-ended individual interviews with a small number of participants, the documented stories will create a series of linked case studies. Case studies are a series of individual stories bound together by time and commonality. Through qualitative research and detailed rich information, the researcher attempts to develop an understanding and description of the important and significant circumstances of a bounded system (Yin, 1994).

According to Clandinin and Connolly (1991), the researchers own story and experiences as they relate to the stories of participants are important components of
narrative analysis. It is through my voice that the participants’ voices are restoried and retold. Themes imbedded in the body of the initial narrative are drawn out and highlighted for the reader. That said, there is no absolute interpretation, no one perfect reflection. The stories and their interpretation are time and place situated and mediated through the role and voice of the researcher (Lapadat, 2003).

Although there is no one perfect reflection, in narrative analysis, there is reflexivity. This is the idea that the researcher does not simply observe or recount observations from an outside perspective, but rather from the inside, because they are an active part of the research (Behar, 1997). The role of participant and researcher, of subject and recorder is blurred, as it is believed that the researcher becomes part of that which is researched. Wanda Pillow (2003) writes that in general, the researchers experience, their framework, and their voice shapes their interpretation, yet it is in using reflexivity that the researcher addresses their own subjectivity and it is this awareness and acknowledgement that provides a sense of clarity, understanding and insight that defines accurate analyses.

In Chapter 7, using the technique of reflexivity, I will explore and define in more detail my voice and my personal and professional awareness that I bring to this research.

*Location in Time and Place*

From listening to the storied experiences of others, our own thoughts, feelings, and experiences may be evoked. We react to and interact with what is being shared. As a result, continued self-growth brings new understanding of past experiences as well as a direction for seeking new experiences (Josselson & Leiblich, 1995). It becomes a matter of continuity for all parties (both listeners and storytellers) as present and future learning
stem from sharing and exploring experiences, and future experiences arise from past experiences (Dewey, 1985). It is my intent in this research to understand how past experiences related to *Mined Minds* influence present and future experiences of the contributors.

My research focuses on young adults commenting on the experience and memories of contributing to a group zine during their youth. The experiences and memories, some of which are up to ten years old, have taken place in a community where none of the participants now reside.

**Participant Selection**

*Mined Minds* began in 1994. In the past twelve years, at least four issues a year have been published. In those twelve years, there have been many contributors to the zine, some contributing only once, others more often, but sporadically, and some consistently for periods of two or more years. As well, over the course of the last ten years, there have been five youth workers whose role was to continue to oversee the production of the zine, and who have contributed differing amounts of time and effort to the project. While every individual involved with *Mined Minds* potentially would have something valuable to contribute, it has not been feasible to interview them all. Considering the sheer number of participants, and the fact that many of the youth who participated with the zine over the years were transient and or street involved\(^6\), locating participants was difficult. This difficulty was exacerbated by the fact that many of the participants contributed to the zine anonymously; searching for and approaching participants would compromise their anonymity.

\(^6\) People who due to individual circumstance, income, and lifestyle find themselves either living on the streets or living off the streets.
Many of the contributors to the zine *Mined Minds* led challenging lives. The zine was initiated by a street involved youth. Also, the Schactto Youth Centre was predominantly visited by youth who were having trouble living at home, in care or attending school or who were having children, or experimenting with drugs and/or alcohol. Perhaps for these reasons, the majority of the youth who became involved and stayed involved with the zine were labeled street involved, high risk or at risk youth. As such, events in childhood and youth were often laden with turbulent times. For those youth who contributed to *Mined Mind*, growing up was not easy. Taking into consideration the many difficulties that Schactto youth faced from homelessness, teen pregnancy and involvement with the legal and medical system, recalling memories and events of those times for the purpose of this research could trigger painful events and as a result find the participant needing support. It would be unethical to explore and disentomb memories of their difficult times, with youth who were emotionally delicate. Many of the youth involved with the centre and with the zine had at some point in their life explored thoughts of suicide and/or the use of drugs and alcohol to escape their memories and realities. It would not be appropriate to have youth who felt alone and without resources participate in the research.

The Youth Centre of Schactto agreed to take on the responsibility of contacting and screening interested young adults who met the selection criteria listed both below and in Appendix A. The Youth Centre and their staff have, in many cases, provided ongoing support for *Mined Minds* contributors, as well as maintained contact throughout the years. As a result, I felt that the Youth Centre and their staff were best suited to estimate the overall state of mental wellness and availability of support for the young adults who
expressed an interest in participating in this project. Due to the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of the youth who participated in the zine, it was at the discretion of interested individuals to make initial contact with me through the telephone, email or direct mail post. The Schactto Youth Centre agreed to provide potential participants with an information letter that I prepared and then to make available to them the use of computer, telephone and stamps for first contact. When the potential participants contacted me, I explained the contract (see Appendix B), my research, the time requirements, and the right of the participant to withdraw at any time.

Selection Criteria

Given constraints of time and space, I developed the following minimum criteria for potential contributors (see Appendix A):

1) The participant has been a contributor in at least two Mined Minds zines. This criteria was included to ensure that the stories compared were suitable to the research topic. 2) the participant is currently nineteen years of age or older. This criteria was included to ensure that participants are legally able to sign their own consent form and release of information. and 3) The participant has met the ethical considerations of: (a) being of seemingly sound mind, and (b) possessing a healthy support network in the event that the sharing of their personal experiences resurrects painful thoughts or feelings.

Given these considerations, and my insider knowledge base of the many youth who participated in Mined Minds over the last ten years, participants were selected through purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). With the boundaries that I had identified, the scope of this project, and the difficulty of finding participants, I had originally hoped to interview between three and six participants. Although there were eight who showed an
interest in the study, three were unable to commit to the entire process and, thus, their stories were not explored. In the end, I was able to interview five participants.

Participant Characteristics

Table 1 below introduces the participants and, using a pseudonym, outlines their background information including: the number of years they participated in Mined Minds; how old they were when they started; how old they were at the time of their interview for this paper, and the reason they stopped participation with the youth zine. Individual participants are introduced in more detail in chapter 4, taking care to leave out specific biographical information that could identify them. I have purposefully been vague in the profiles to preserve their anonymity both from the readers of this research, the youth centre that will receive a copy of the paper, and the many agencies in Schactto who may read this thesis as well as from one participant to another. The current age of the participant refers to the age that the participants were at the time that their final interview for this research took place, which was in all cases the spring of 2005.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym / Gender</th>
<th>What age started participating in Mined Minds</th>
<th>How many years participated in Mined Minds</th>
<th>Reason left Mined Minds</th>
<th>Current Age (as of Oct, 2005)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fish / Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Moved to attend university</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dice / Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Change in youth worker</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayton / Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Outgrew Mined Minds</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raine / Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Turned 19</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jj / Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Moved to attend college</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Interviews

Participant stories were collected through open-ended personal interviews. Due to the various cities and towns that the participants live in, interviews were conducted in all but two cases over the telephone, with some mail and internet correspondence. One interview was conducted entirely over email and the other was conducted in one face-to-face interview, with follow-ups conducted by email.

The telephone and face-to-face interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. I transcribed the interviews myself. Email and Canada Post correspondence were maintained in their original states (although they were dated to provide a timeline of the order material was received). These assorted documents, referred to by Clandinin & Connelly (2000) as “field text,” provided the raw data from which I then read, reread and restored the participants’ narratives. The restored narratives later were shared with the participants for feedback and final approval. The participants were emailed the transcribed interview and, afterwards, could decide to alter, elaborate or eliminate any of the material before I began the process of identifying themes and common learnings. No one made any changes of any kind, although three participants supplemented their interviews with additional written material, current writings and a copy of the original poster that “grabbed his/her attention” for his/her first contribution to *Mined Minds*.

Stories, it is noted, do not take place in straight lines, but in circles (Metzger, 1986). When beginning the telephone or face-to-face interviews, I asked the participants to introduce themselves and their experience with *Mined Minds*, reminding them that I was interested in how they feel that experience shaped them into who they are today. In
addition, I had prefabricated a list of biographical and other questions which I used when I felt that further questions were needed to develop the story (Lincoln, 1995). These questions are listed in Appendices C and D.

The initial telephone interviews lasted between an hour and an hour and a half with an average of two follow-up email transactions. The follow-ups were used to verify that I had heard and transcribed the information correctly and to verify what information, if any, the participants did not want me to share. In regard to the interview conducted entirely over email, that correspondence took place over a period of three months with twelve different email transactions. There were times when I emailed additional open-ended questions for the participant to respond to, the same ones that I had used in the face-to-face interviews.

During my first telephone interview, two additional questions came up which were later added to the list of possible questions due to the insight which I felt they provided. The additional question was 14) What ten things come to mind when you think of Mined Minds? 15) What do you know for sure about your experience with zines and Mined Minds.

These questions provided additional insight into the experiences of the zinesters and what stood out from their memories and the themes will be further discussed in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven.

Data Analysis

The narratives shared by participants are believed to be teaching tools in and of themselves, laden with meaning, metaphors and reflections (Andrews, 2002). Narratives, rich in both personal and cultural interpretations, are not only representative of individual
experiences of the participants, but can be a catalyst into the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the researcher (Cottle, 2002). For this reason, composing the research text requires multiple stages to ensure that, first, I am hearing what the participants are saying in the searching for themes and restorying process; and, second, I am noting my own feelings, thoughts and reactions to what is being said.

I found that my own memories, thoughts, feelings and reactions did in fact unfold during this process. I experienced nostalgia during the interview process by connecting with youth whom I had not heard from in some time, as well as feeling a sense of pride at the impact that the zine experience had on the contributors. I found my thoughts and feelings extended to other youth whom I did not interview, particularly when participants mentioned their names and influence during the interviews. I found myself thinking of other individuals with whom I had shared zine experiences, aside from the *Minded Minds* experience. I found myself making collage and written reflections to process the thoughts and emotions that I was feeling, some of which I have included in chapter seven. I have also included, with their permission, some of the original written and artistic work of the participants from their *Mined Mined* contributions. These pieces, have in all cases been photocopied from the original zine, and reconfigured with other works from four of the five participants, with additional words, collages and thoughts that I am fully responsible for, dispersed throughout in zine fashion. Unfortunately, there were no contributions found from the participant Dayton in the archived zines to which I had access. In the case where a piece of work is not authored with the participant's pen name, it is my own work and design. My work, and the writings and artwork of participants, are included to create the "feel of a zine". Although controversial, the use of
experimental methods to express thoughts, observations and even shared memories provides a unique framework in which to express and represent myself as researcher, the researched and the reader (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

In creating the research text from the transcripts, many factors must be taken into consideration including, but not limited to: the accurate portrayal of the participants’ voices; the use of metaphors; the meaning attributed to experiences and the use of images (Oliver, 1998; Lapadat, 2000). To ensure that I have done this accurately, I have made sure to involve the participants in the restorying of their story, sharing with them the story that I have restoried from their own words and asking for any additional comments and input from the participants. The only revisions by contributors included the correction of a current and accurate website as well as updated contact telephone numbers, which I have not included in the body of this thesis.

After having taped each interview with the participant, whether done in person or on the telephone and in one case after having compiled their emailed text, I found myself taking a mental break from the material. I did not try to make sense of the material, but rather paused from it and distanced myself from it as much as I could for a period of at least a week. During this time, I would find myself thinking about the information shared and would write down key phrases, ideas, words, themes or statements that I remembered, or that made an impact on me. After the week, I would revisit the interview and compare if what I had remembered had in fact existed. If it did not, then I separated my inferences from facts and made a note of them. I transcribed the material, writing down only the words spoken and not my reaction. Once transcriptions were completed, I would take another week-long break. In that time I would write down thoughts, feelings,
ideas, images and reactions that I had to the information. Sometimes this came out in poetic form or in short prose, some of which I have included in Chapter Seven.

By taking time and giving myself permission to process my own thoughts, feelings, ideas, images and reactions that arose from listening to the stories of the participants I believe I was better able to separate myself and my story from the story relayed by the participants.

Then came the act of restorying. These pieces seemed to flow naturally, from a transcript to a narrative. I would cross out everything I had used from the transcript to the restory until I had included everything that did not identify the person, such as names, and specific events. Initially I had left out some of the specifics regarding the intensity and challenges that the participants had faced in their early years, but after having reviewed the material with the participants, each felt that it was important to include some of their unique challenges while growing up that highlighted their opportunities and choices as youth or lack thereof. I included the details that participants believed were information rich that would highlight the important and influential role that *Mined Minds* played in their lives. I compressed the interviews, in such a way that I may have eliminated repeated statements and turned the restoried text into a third person narrative, but I do not feel that I left any pertinent facts out. Themes, main ideas and statements came directly from the individual interviewed. Through the use of the participants own stories, words and images portrayed, the individual's experiences, thoughts and feelings from working on the zine became evident and clear themes were identified. Raine, for example, made continued reference to feeling supported and respected through her contributions to *Mined Minds* and jokingly said more than once during her interview that
she "felt like a rockstar" as a result of being published and read by her peers. Raine stated along with other participants that the support she received from her involvement with the zine was "exactly what she needed" at that time in her life. This theme, identified by other participants became a paper topic heading. I used themes that were repeated from other participants, or unique to single participants but highly significant, to create topic headings throughout the paper. I shared the restored pieces with the participants and asked for feedback and whether they felt there was anything to add or highlight. This was incorporated into the final draft.

My own story of zines and the zine experience came out parallel to conducting and processing the interviews, but I kept separate my reactions, often making notes, writing prose, and collecting images and words from magazines and newspapers. I made assorted collages throughout this process, some of which I have included. I did not create a written text until I had completed compiling the collected stories of the participants in chapters five and six. Chapter seven, which denotes my own experiences, thoughts and reaction was written quickly and was uninterrupted as though my own thoughts, inferences and learnings were spilling out onto the page, ready to be shared.

Ethical Considerations

Because narrative inquiry is a qualitative and interpretive form of research with the intent of retelling and analyzing the meaning of people's experiences (Hadjistavropoulos & Smythe, 2001), there are many ethical considerations to address. First, there are ethical issues relating to identifying and selecting participants. The Schactto Youth Centre agreed to discuss my research project with their current and past Mined Minds contributors. In addition, the Youth Centre staff volunteered to take on the
responsibility of providing interested youth and young adults whom they believe have a strong support network and a resilient character with my contact information. Further, the Youth Centre agreed to provide initial access by phone and email, and to provide envelopes and stamps should anyone wish to contact me with an expressed interest in learning about and possibly participating in my research. Once the potential participant’s made contact, we discussed the project in greater detail, and identified the individuals’ support networks of friends, family and local resources should the interviews lead to difficult or painful thoughts and feelings.

In the initial information letter to potential participants, and in subsequent conversations and contact with the participants, it was discussed that prior to participating in the research, a consent form would be required and that participants could at any time or for any reason withdraw from the study. As well, at any time, participants could change or eliminate something they had said or written.

Prior to the research taking place, after participants were fully informed about the nature and purpose of the project, consent was given in writing on a consent form outlining the purpose of the study, the research process, the recording method of the interviews and the confidentiality that would be maintained (see Appendix E). As per Munhall’s (1998) concept of “process content”, continuing participant consent was rechecked throughout the entirety of this process and participants were able to withdraw their consent at any time.

Due to the small number of overall contributors to Mined Minds over the last ten years and the small size of the town of Schactto, true anonymity may be difficult to maintain within the community, although all steps to do so have been undertaken, such as
giving the contributors a pseudonym and disguising biographical information. Audiotapes and interview transcripts will be held in accordance with the University of Northern British Columbia requirements and then destroyed. The names of youth workers and founding members of the zine also have been disguised.

It is important to note that, while those five participants involved in this research have relevant and informative stories, there are many stories left untold. In particular, this research does not include the stories of those youth who are still street involved, or who have moved or severed ties with the Youth Centre and its staff.

Narrative research can bring up unexpected thoughts and feelings. As I am responsible for restorying the participants’ narratives, participants must be made aware that the telling of their story from my perspective may produce an unpredictable reaction (Josselson, 1996). Because participants were youth or young adults at the time of their involvement with Mined Minds, memories of their experience may rekindle difficult or painful memories and experiences related to their youth. As such, it has been my responsibility, both as a researcher and as a counselor, to ensure that the participants were aware that such triggers may occur and to screen out those whom I believed may not have the coping mechanisms to deal with such triggers. All participants were asked to identify, prior to the first interview, a strong and reliable resource base that they have available to them to help them deal with such emotions should they arise. In the event that emotional memories are raised for the participants, I was prepared to offer if needed, referrals to appropriate mental health services. At the time of this publication, none of the participants expressed a need or appeared to need such referrals. However, due to
this necessary requirement of a strong network and support system, potential participants were screened out, again, leaving a gap among those who are telling the story.
IV. INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS

“We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are”.
Talmud in Cohen

Each of the five participants participated for a period of time in *Mined Minds* through the Schactto Youth Centre at some point during their youth. Across these five individuals, their total participation over the ten years was more than 22 years of experience. One might expect these spanned years, coupled with fellow zinester’s comings and goings as well as youth worker changes to have had varying impacts on the individual perceptions and experiences of the zinesters. In this chapter, the individual participants are introduced through my interpretation of their narratives. I have included such details as their previous experiences with self-expression and zines, reasons for participating in the zine *Mined Minds*, how long they participated, and the reasons they left the zine. Here I also present their descriptions of self expression and their involvement with the group experience since they left the zine and, their current level of education and work experience. The chapter concludes with a reformatted and reconstructed zine page from four of the five participants and with their written permission, assorted photocopied original contributions. Pseudonyms used in this paper have been included where relevant.

*Fish*

Fish remembers his experience with *Mined Minds* fondly. He attributes much of where he is now in life to his initial and long-term involvement with *Mined Minds* and to the people he met through the experience. Some of these people are still in his life today. Others while not in touch with Fish and perhaps not alive, remain an important part of his memories and have shaped him.
Fish became involved with *Mined Minds* after reading a poster at his high school looking for contributors for a zine starting at the local Youth Centre. Fish did not even know that the community had a local Youth Centre until that moment. Fish can not only recall from memory the highlights of the first poster, but he has kept a copy of it. In respect for anonymity, a copy of the poster has been altered and can be viewed in Figure 5.

*Mined Minds* was intended to be a zine created by and for Schactto youth, particularly those who were homeless and street involved. Fish was neither, but he had not been the same since his mother died only two years earlier. Fish recounts that he did not speak of his mother’s illness or death. He remembers himself to be introverted, quiet and introspective. He was not communicating his thoughts, feelings and the many images he had of death, dying and living with anyone, because he had no one to tell; he felt abnormal and different and did not know how to process it. Once he joined *Mined Minds*, Fish met a group of teens, who, while they may not have shared his grief and angst ridden feelings, had their own. It was a new kind of normal to have, to admit and share thoughts and feelings related to hate, fear, anger and confusion. Fish, a self-described “sheltered geek nerd”\(^7\) was looking for a meaningful, safe way to engage with the world. Fish had for a long time been doing some creative writing and journaling for himself and was looking for a platform to share his writing, his thoughts and his feelings. The zine poster implied something edgy and exciting and Fish remembers craving a way to feel alive, a part of something. At seventeen, he ventured down to the Youth Centre to see what it was all about.

\(^7\) *Geek:* generally intelligent people but with strange interests  
*Nerd:* generally intelligent and introverted people.
Figure 5. First *Mined Minds* Recruitment Poster

Can you draw?

Need a Rag to Air Your Birdy?

Offbeat + Offbalance

Especially Vellum

Because it's a Locating

*Bye* About Teenanger

We need submissions. Now!

Drop yer laundry

$ is a possibility

*No Lillygagger, Misters & Missys*
Fish had been writing and drawing in personal journals for some time and believed innately that he had worthwhile ideas to share. He said that he felt a strong desire to express himself to an audience rather than keeping his ideas and art to himself. Fish mentioned that he did not always have an easy time talking, and was constantly sketching and writing poetry to express himself, his anger, his sadness and even his silly and thoughtful nature. In a time of personal turmoil and strife, Fish often wrote happy poetry, philosophical thoughts and drew sun-inspired and happy-faced art. *Mined Minds* gave him a venue, "a place to crawl out of his own shell and into his own skin." Fish believes that his *Mined Minds* experience opened up his whole world, largely due to his having met other teenagers who had strong and strange opinions. These fellow contributors accepted Fish for who he was, and were fun to hang around with and talk to. Working on the zine and hanging out at the Schactto Youth Centre exposed Fish to other types of beings, including Goths, hippies, beats, punks, and youth who were angry political people. By connecting with others, different from himself, Fish felt that he had a chance to see the world differently, from their perspective. Fish's involvement with *Mined Minds* began when he was seventeen. He held many roles in the zine, including contributor, editor, producer and, even recruiter. Over time, he became the longest consistent member of editors and writers, participating for a total of six years. As the years went on Fish found himself attending every meeting, and he even began to volunteer at the Schactto Youth Centre. Eventually Fish's role was official. He became a Youth Centre staff member, helping to organize, plan, and officiate open mike nights. Fish worked at the Youth Centre and with *Mined Minds* until he left for University where
he eventually found himself completing a developmental psychology degree. Fish created his own independent zine and also organized and facilitated other group youth zines. Now he has begun to sell his artwork via the internet and local venues. Fish also has done creative work such as video editing and is contemplating making a documentary about zines and the desire to communicate. At 27\(^8\) years of age, Fish continues to work with youth, to do workshops on zine-making, and to produce and facilitate youth self-expression through a zine format. Fish also continues to work on his own zine. Once mentored, Fish is now mentoring.

\textit{jj}

jj, who prefers two small case j's be used, began the interview stating that she became involved with \textit{Mined Minds} when she was fifteen, having been in and out of foster care and group homes in a number of communities for many years. jj, while viewing herself as intelligent, had been having trouble in school and had contemplated the idea of dropping out many times. Between being in school and being a “Child of the Ministry”, jj said she often felt misunderstood, unwanted, and undervalued. jj recounted making suicide attempts which she said was her way of screaming that she needed some regular attention, some regular contact with caring, sincere adults and peers. jj joked that what she got was a referral to weekly visits with a psychologist.

When asked how she became involved with the zine, jj, currently 23 years of age, discussed a housemate of hers who had been attending the Youth Centre and on one occasion, by chance, jj came down to the Schactto Youth Centre with her. It happened to be open mike night, and jj, who otherwise felt she kept to herself, performed one of her

\footnote{This age, and age of all participants mentioned in this chapter are based on their age at the time of their last interview conducted in 2005.}
original poems. It was not until the centre's Youth worker saw her waiting for a local bus, and invited her to contribute her material to the local zine, that jj decided to participate in the zine. The next thing you know, jj said, she was moving away to begin college just a few months shy of her nineteenth birthday.

jj declared that she was no stranger to zines, having been made aware of them through a penpal who would often share her own perzine. jj recounted being interested in the concept of zines, a seemingly fun way to vent one's frustration and create a venue to communicate to a wider audience. Although jj said she had seen issues of Mined Minds at the school counselling centre, it was the combination of being at the centre and participating in the open mike night, having material on hand, and having been offered a personal invitation to submit her writings that led her to become involved. jj said she stayed involved for the next three plus years, partially because of having an outlet to have her writings published, partially because she was making a bit of cash, and partially because she was around the centre and saw the contributor's box sitting there, untouched for weeks at a time, full of stuff that no one appeared to be working into a zine. jj laughed as she talked about her self-motivation to help put the zine together. She laughed, she said, because others did not think of her as the responsible, committed type.

jj explained that she learned a lot about herself during her involvement with the zine. She learned that she could take on a leadership role in a project as well as motivate others to participate. She learned that she was disorganized but could still get things done. She learned that she had something to say and that what she had to say was valid. She learned that when a lot of people who don't have a lot of opportunities to express what they have to say suddenly do have an opportunity, they have valid contributions to
Zine is Believing

make. Basically she acknowledged that a lot of people have a lot of things to say, but not many places to say it. It was fellow zinesters, she mused, that she met through *Mined Minds*, that *jj* befriended and developed friendships with. It was fellow zinesters she met through *Mined Minds* that she invited over to her own place when she began independent living. It was fellow zinesters she met through *Mined Minds* who helped her to pack up and prepare for her move to begin college.

*jj* said that, prior to her involvement with *Mined Minds*, she had been an avid writer, jotting her poetry, short stories and musings in journals that she had kept to herself. *jj’s* viewed her early submissions as autobiographical, depicting personal thoughts, feelings and experiences, as they related to the difficult realities of sexual abuse, sexual identity and feelings of worthiness. *jj* said that she has since moved away from the autobiographical writings, and her current material is more abstract, focusing on poetry, poetic prose and other rambling observations. Instead her current creations are timeless philosophical pieces and collages.

When *jj* left Schactto, she said it was to attend a community college, majoring in English, and she now wishes desperately to go overseas to teach English. Her love of language, self-expression and writing persists and, aside from producing more than thirty perzines, she has also worked on an online zine “Radio Free Mercury” with cyber friends, of which she is very proud. *jj* extends an invitation to anyone to explore it online through the same name. *jj* continues to read her poetry and musings at assorted poetry jams and open mike nights and mentioned that the one thing she knows for sure is that “zines are not going anywhere. They are here to stay.”
Dayton

Dayton was involved with *Mined Minds* between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, a period of his life that was extremely turbulent. Although he claims that *Mined Minds* played only a minor role in his young life, what is most interesting about Dayton's story is that he did participate in *Mined Minds* consistently despite the fact that he was living on the streets throughout this three-year period.

By age twelve, Dayton was no longer living at home and did not have a regular place to sleep, eat or bathe. Dayton did not have the luxury of earning an allowance or receiving parental guidance. Instead, Dayton had the Schactto Youth Centre Centre staff and other youth. In effect, *Mined Minds* contributors and participants were members of his family at that time. The zine and self-expression played a background to more important and immediate elements of his life, those of companionship, respect and belonging.

Dayton had never been involved with a zine before, nor has he since. He participated because "everyone he knew was doing it" and it was easy money. Dayton, who does not often do what others were doing, indicated that he was reluctant to participate in the zine for a number of reasons. Dayton can be a very expressive and passionate writer, writing societal commentaries and opinion pieces for his classes, yet his contributions to the zine were subtler. Dayton suggested that while he wanted to contribute, he recognized early on that if he allowed his contributions to be a reflection of his thoughts and feelings he would be emotionally vulnerable. Dayton survived his childhood and youth by protecting himself, by camouflaging his thoughts and feelings; therefore, for his contributions, Dayton chose art as a medium that was less obvious.
Although as a young man he was not regularly attending school, not living at home, and not in the habit of interacting with authority figures, Dayton says he was a regular attendee and contributor to *Mined Minds* meetings. Dayton does not get nostalgic about this; he recognizes that he desperately needed cash and *Mined Minds* was a "cash cow". In exchange for his contributions, editorial assistance and distribution support, Dayton was able to make much needed money. He also observes that he had the benefit of being surrounded by peers and Youth Centre staff who supported him emotionally, providing simple meals and a couch to nap on.

Dayton's ability to put pencil to paper, and to be recognized and paid for his talents, honored his independence and his efforts. Dayton's independence and struggle for survival eventually took him away from Schaetco at the age of 16 but, when he did return to town, he recounts almost always stopping by the Youth Centre, and almost always looking to read the latest issues of *Mined Minds*. At a time when Dayton was so wrapped up in his own survival, he was and is still aware of, respectful and proud of other zine contributors, downplaying his own contributions and wanting to make sure that other contributors are given the recognition that he believed they deserve.

When Dayton left the zine, he felt that the experience for him was growing stale. Same people, same look, full of the same type of material and contributions. Perhaps, most importantly, Dayton did not want to share his material with the new and expanding list of readers, nor did he want to "fill his head with what others were writing." He speculates that some of his disenchantment related to the age appropriateness of the zine and his level of life experience. Dayton, today at 23, says that he simply outgrew *Mined Minds*. 
Dayton is now working full time, in a field requiring some creativity and ability to interact with people. He is nurturing a long-term relationship, supporting himself, and earning the respect that I believe he so deserves.

Dice

Dice is soft-spoken, almost timid in her discussion about Mined Minds. This is surprising to me, as most people who worked on Mined Minds have commented on her influence, her dedication and her leadership role in the zine for the period that she was involved. Through Dice’s narrative, I learned that Dice’s leadership role was often behind the scenes. A self proclaimed non-people person, she says she preferred to work on layout, typing, photocopying, distribution and the odd research piece. Dice admits that she has kept each issue that she worked on as a keepsake, a link to her past. She keeps these in storage and, although she has not looked at them for some time, can still recall individual pieces that she or others wrote that stand out for her or that moved her. She recalls her friends who also worked on the zine, and those who did a lot of writing and dedicated a lot of time to its success.

When Dice first heard about Mined Minds, it was because she “hung out” at the Youth Centre and attended the local coffee houses/open mike nights where youth would read their poetry and zine contributions to a live audience. Dice had never heard of zines, and had never done any creative writing until she started working on Mined Minds. She had been and remains much more involved in sports and physical activities. The zine was a Youth Centre project; it had moved home base and production meetings were held at an alternative school after hours where the outreach worker at the time also worked. Dice says that her enrolment at the alternate school was a compromise to avoid getting
“kicked out” of school altogether. Being raised in a single parent household, Dice found herself rebelling and, she said, in her mother’s opinion she was “hanging around with the wrong crowd”. Dice felt that as a teen she had “experimented” extensively and did not believe she would graduate herself. Dice said that it was because of the strong support from the Youth Centre staff as well as caring responsible adult friends that she weathered her youth.

Dice worked on the paper from the ages of fourteen to sixteen until a change in youth workers and a change in the zine’s home location occurred. Eventually the zine moved back to the Youth Centre and a new youth outreach worker was brought on board. Through these changes, *Mined Minds* youth contributors changed and a different crowd of zinesters emerged. Dice did not follow although she did continue to attend the Youth Centre and read the zine.

Dice said that the main reason she stayed with the zine was because of the youth worker at the time. Working on the zine was a good way to spend time with the youth worker with whom she developed a strong relationship. Dice describes the youth worker as making meetings fun, being the ultimate motivator, and encouraging youth to show up for meetings. This youth worker, according to Dice, created a venue for open conversations and debates which Dice believes helped her to open her mind, to believe that she did have alternatives, and to see that she was capable of more than the small town scene, drugs and living on welfare. Dice said that she had always had dreams of one day being a working professional and traveling, but it was through her relationships that she developed at the Youth Centre and through *Mined Minds* that she began to believe that it was actually possible.
Dice also felt that the cash incentive to work on the program was a positive factor, in addition to the fact that she could use zine experience on her resume. Dice admits that she proudly continues to list her *Mined Minds* experience on her resume. Dice believes that this experience indicates her ability to work independently and with groups, her ability to work on something long-term and her possession of office related skills. Dice has participated in a variety of group projects over the years, although she has not done much writing or drawing since. She prefers physical activities and sports. At 23 years of age, she is now a third year Science major at a large university.

*Raine*

With her easy-going manner and quick laugh, Raine is a natural storyteller. She remembered hearing about *Mined Minds* by word of mouth on one of her visits to the Schactto Youth Centre. At that time, Raine was not getting along well with her mother or siblings, when she felt she needed them the most. Raine felt lonely and as a result was developing friendships with people who she now refers to as “not real good choices”. Be it drugs, alcohol, the wrong kind of boys or trouble with the law, Raine says she learned the hard way about who she was as a person, what her values were, and where her dreams lay. She often came down to the Youth Centre or to *Mined Minds* meetings to talk about her concerns, fears and options. She says she did not feel judged, just heard, and that was a good start for her to choose a different path.

Raine recounted being fourteen at the time she started with the zine. The names of other zine participants rolled off her lips and she pondered where they are now and what they are doing. Raine talked of her own experiences, having moved a few times, travelled overseas and having started her second term of university. All the while,
whether travelling, working or being a youth, Raine has been expressing herself through her poetry and songwriting. “I am a big fan of poetry and it is an easy way to express how I am feeling and I just thought the zine was a real cool idea. That someone was interested in my poems, that I could actually put them in a magazine, even a little zine, was cool. I felt like a rock star.” And then she laughed infectiously.

Raine articulates being as proud of her contributions then as she is now at the age of 24. She remembers showing everybody and anybody what she wrote: her parents, friends, teachers and even the other zinesters. She collected old issues and, even today, six years later, she will flip through them and remember. Raine states with confidence that she feels and knows that she is a writer at heart. She notes that there is a certain degree of responsibility that goes along with contributing to a zine, whether it be meeting deadlines or working as a member of a group.

Raine, while mostly a poet for Mined Minds, also helped with production and layout as needed. Her involvement lasted for five years, from the ages of fourteen to nineteen. Although Mined Minds did not have an age restriction on it, often the weekly meetings were held at the Schactto Youth Centre which only served youth younger than nineteen. That said, special events and Mined Minds participants were exempt from this rule and youth over the ages of nineteen could attend. While Raine was aware of this exception, after the age of nineteen she no longer went down to the centre to “hang out” and her involvement with Mined Minds lapsed. Participating in Mined Minds fueled Raine’s interest in writing and her belief in her self. She discovered that, not only was she capable of writing and creative modes of expression, but that she felt good when she did it and it was well received by her peers and by adults. Raine recognizes that, at some
point, she grew up and moved on. Raine has not stopped writing: she continues to write for herself, for her own journals, and to date has written and performed many songs.

Summary

All of the participants interviewed showed great power and ability to be introspective. Their memories of their experiences with *Mined Minds* flowed naturally and they recounted many stories of that time, often inquiring about other contributors that they had lost track of, and naming other contributors whom they feel contributed more than they. In the following chapter, I discuss in more detail individual themes discussed as well as those that emerged as common themes among the participants.
V. A BRIGHT LIGHT AT A DARK TIME: THE ZINE AS INTERNALLY NURTURING

"You have to recognize when the right place and the right time fuse and take advantage of that opportunity. You can’t sit back and wait".
Ellen Metcalf

The open-ended questions posed to the participants were designed to glean an understanding of the impact that Mined Minds played in the lives of the participants. It was through their individual stories and recalled memories that themes became evident, either significant and reoccurring for the individual or significant and reoccurring for other participants. Among the five participants, the most prevalent theme was the awareness that their participation in Mined Minds was a bright light in an otherwise dark period of their life, a time when self-development, self-exploration and self-expression were being explored.

This chapter explores the important role that Mined Minds played in the study participants’ lives during the time they participated in the zine and now as they reflect on it, focusing on the internal reactions the participants had to their involvement with the zine. The next chapter will identify the external impacts of their involvement, including the intense and important relationships that Mined Minds brought, the impact that these relationships have had, and the impact of acknowledged self-expression, individuality, creativity and voice. This chapter begins with a brief discussion of how participants came to be involved with the zine and the role played by the Schactto Youth Centre.

Participant Involvement In The Zine

How they first heard about Mined Minds

When Dice first heard about Mined Minds, it was because she was already a regular attendee at the Youth Centre, accessed the youth worker and attended local coffee
houses where youth would read their poetry and short stories, sing songs and tell jokes. Dice discussed sitting on the board of directors and being an active volunteer at the Youth Centre throughout her youth.

Dayton began his involvement with *Mined Minds* citing the reason that everyone else he knew was participating. At this time, Dayton was no longer living at home and did not have a regular place to sleep, eat or bath. Dayton did not have the luxury of earning an allowance or receiving parental guidance. Instead, Dayton had the Schactto Youth Centre. Because Dayton was a regular attendee at the Youth Centre, where *Mined Minds* met regularly, his participation in the zine was a natural progression from his spending time at the centre. That and the fact that *Mined Minds* offered contributors a stipend, based on the number of pieces they contributed and the extent to which they assisted with production and distribution, was another incentive for Dayton to continue to participate.

jj’s experience with *Mined Minds* came strictly by chance: right place, right time, and poetry in hand. jj admits she was somewhat opportunistic. As it happens, she was down at the Youth Centre to participate in an open mike night when she noticed the submission box for *Mined Minds*. Once it was discovered she was an artist, a writer and performer, she was invited to submit her writing. jj says she stayed involved partially because of having the outlet to have her writings published, partially to make a bit of cash and partially because she started to hang around the Centre anyway, and seeing the contribution box sitting there unattended prompted her to be proactive and take the initiative to help put the zine together.
Fish was the participant least likely to combine his *Mined Mind* experience with his Schaecto Youth Centre experience, although he credits both with playing an important role in his life, both then and now. Fish recalls hearing about *Mined Minds* through a poster he saw at his high school recruiting contributors. "Working on the zine, and hanging out at the Schaecto Youth Centre exposed me to other types of beings, skaters, Goths, hippies, beats, punks as well as angry political people." By connecting with others, different from himself, Fish felt that he had the chance to see the world from other perspectives. Through years of participating with the zine and at zine meetings Fish was exposed to the Youth Centre, its programs and eventually he began volunteering for assorted events. His volunteering later led to being offered assorted jobs, which further nurtured his interest and confidence in working with youth and led to his pursuit of a degree in developmental psychology.

Raine remembers hearing about *Mined Minds* by word of mouth on one of her first visits to the Schaecto Youth Centre. Working on the zine and having a place to publish her poetry, as well as finding a place to hang out with people who were glad to see her "was the pie". Raine says that at age fourteen, she felt a part of something and felt that the Youth Centre, staff and zine contributors were an extension of her family. Raine says she used the Youth Centre to its utmost, including using staff as references and resources, participating in workshops, interviewing new employees, and working at the Youth Centre itself. Although Raine started out talking about *Mined Minds* as a Schaecto Youth Centre program, she does not distinguish between them. Zine or drop-in centre the two are the same in Raine's memories.
The Role of the Youth Centre

In each of the five narratives, the participants discussed the zine and zine meetings as places they felt free to be themselves, to explore ideas, and to be challenged and challenged. They felt that they were surrounded by peers and adults who did not judge them, but rather accepted them for who they were and for what they were willing and able to contribute.

In each narrative there was some mention of the Shactto Youth Centre, which housed the zine. For some the zine was recognized as being an extension of their involvement with the Youth Centre; for others, the centre, its staff and its activities were separate but they accessed all that each had to offer; and for yet another, the zine experience and the Youth Centre were seen as interchangeable.

Three of the five participants went on to work for the Youth Centre for a period time. Two of the participants acknowledged that their Youth Centre experience played a significant role in their career choices. Three of the participants sat on the board as youth representatives, taking an active role in the planning of activities, hiring staff and other important management of the Centre. Each of the participants volunteered for numerous activities, including fundraising activities, and took part in training and educational workshops that were hosted by or for the youth, such as the HIV Peer Education program, the Beauty From The Inside Out workshop, and the development and training of a support group for gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered youth. Other areas of involvement included speaking publicly at city council for funding.

Some of the participants had difficulty distinguishing between the Youth Centre and the zine. Although they understood that they were different, the production and
distribution of the zine took place through the Youth Centre and it was Youth Centre
staff, in particular the outreach worker, who facilitated the meetings and ensured proper
payment to the contributors. Four times a year the Youth Centre held coffee houses/open
mike nights in which zine contributors and Youth Centre members came together to
entertain and showcase their poetry, musical, dramatic and comedic talents. In addition,
zine meetings were held, for all but one year, in the Youth Centre, where youth would
often come early or stay late, hanging out with other youth that did not necessarily
participate in the zine.

In all but Fish’s story, the participants stated that they heard about or got involved
with the zine having already been involved with the Youth Centre. Fish, on the other
hand, had not known prior to reading about the start of the zine that there was a Youth
Centre in town.

It is difficult to determine where the influence of the zine started and ended. One
did not have to be a member of the Schaecto Youth Centre to be a part of it, but it seemed
that, for the five participants, being a part of the zine was intertwined with the Youth
Centre. The narratives outline this interrelationship and will be explored in further detail.

*Internal Reactions*

"Just what I was needing"

All the participants acknowledged that their zine experience provided them with
what they needed at that time in their lives, whether it was money, a voice, or a place to
be themselves. Being a youth in a small town poses some unique challenges, such as
lack of privacy and limited options. As a youth growing up in a small town with
small-town mentalities, one can find that it is extremely difficult to be different. Raine said that being able to publish her poetry and thoughts in a zine made her feel less awkward and different and instead she felt like a “rock star.” “I am and was a big fan of poetry and it was an easy way to express how I was feeling and I just thought that the zine was a cool idea. That someone was interested in my poems, that I could actually publish them in a magazine, even a little one, was cool.” Raine states that she was as proud of her contributions then as she is now. She would show her poetry and drawings, published in *Mined Minds* to everybody and anybody—her parents, friends, teachers and even the other zinesters. Raine recalls feeling “the love,” which was exactly what she needed at a rebellious stage in her life. She felt that the Youth Centre and zine were always there for her to support and encourage her, when her friends and family were focussed on other things. The centre was open long hours with a staff person or fellow zinesters available to talk to. The casual and safe environment appealed to her, she muses was a sort of “alternate living room.” The publishing appealed to her because she was able to share her thoughts and ideas with others.

Raine’s feelings in this regard were shared by all the participants except one. Four of the five participants said that they were closet writers and artists, often putting pen to paper and keeping journals and poetry books which they had not previously shared with others. Fish revealed that he did not always have an easy time talking and, instead, found himself sketching and writing poetry to express himself, his anger, his sadness and even his silly side. Publishing art, poetry and stories felt like a “worthwhile way to share,” and Fish felt an intense desire to express himself to an audience rather than keeping his creativity to himself. It was a way to take himself more seriously: “The zine
was a place for me to crawl out of my shell and come into my own skin. To feel alive and crackling with the energy of constructing something that felt like it impacted the world.” Fish stated that contributing to the zine allowed him a meaningful and fun way to “engage the world.” He remembers previously feeling out of place in that world.

jj had recently moved to the Schactto area. An avid writer, she said that she sometimes felt like an outsider. jj had faced a difficult childhood and early adolescence. She had moved many times, her guardianship had changed and her trust had been shaken, as she was involved in a lengthy and emotionally complicated legal battle during her early teens. Being involved with Mined Minds she shares, provided her with stability and was a positive experience among many other negative experiences. jj said she believes that working and connecting with others on the zine as well as reading their works let her see that her pain was not the only pain out there, and that there were a lot of people who were going through rough times. “It wasn’t a really happy, light zine; there was a lot of darkness in it. It really mitigated my darkness in that I felt that I was not alone, I am not alone in the pit. There are other people here with me. One could think this would be even more depressing, but it wasn’t. It was reaffirming.” Two reformatted and reconstructed zine pages from four of the five contributor’s original material over the course of their involvement has been included to illustrate jj’s point (see Figure 6 and Figure 7). Pseudonyms have not been included on these particular pieces, for the sake of anonymity, but written permission was granted to use the material. I wrote the piece titled “Community Profile” which appeared in one of the original Mined Minds and was inspired by my involvement with the youth of Schactto.
I am the one who will become myself.
I am the he who is the person he will be.
I am the I that is constantly changing.
I am who I am.

A FORK IN THE ROAD

Out of Reach
Or at a safe distance,
I walk.
And as the foginess pours over,
a fear of doubt becomes repetitive in my mind.
What do I ask for that is forbidden?
Why does a feeling of comfort beg to be uncomfortable?
The days linger on,
for I have no use to hold on to this meaning.
So hold me closer.
I speak.
But form no words for your understanding.
I am growing restless,
and anticipation has become my fear.

Rain.
I am the clerk at the liquor board store who knows that the liquor I sell will be abused.
I am the teacher who tries to teach in a classroom where the pupils are tired and irritable due to a lack of sleep and poor nutrition.
I am the parent with the open door policy who wonders why some parents decided to become parents at all.
I am the bus driver who listens to the youth compete with stories of endless nights and reckless behavior.
I am the pedestrian watching your child drive recklessly.
I am the neighbor who lies awake listening to the party take place at your house while you are away.
I am the doctor who prescribes birth control, knowing that condom use will fall and STD rates and teen pregnancy will rise.
I am the police officer who enters parties and crime scenes where youth are fueled by anger, lack of respect and fear.
I am the judge who listens to stories of B&E’s, assault and shoplifting, knowing that the consequences/punishment I must enforce will do nothing to instill values or respect.
I am the drug dealer who is just trying to make a living.
I am the clergy who lays your child to rest.
I am twelve and.....
Dayton as a survivor was and is extremely self-sufficient. Having lived wherever he could since the age of twelve, whether on his own or on the streets, Dayton's resilience was obvious in his *Mined Minds* contributions. Although Dayton is an extremely expressive and passionate writer, his contributions over the years were subtler, mainly consisting of cartoons and drawings. Dayton felt that his desire to contribute was largely influenced by his urgency to get paid and that his writings were a reflection of his thoughts and feelings of the time. As such, he said that too much honesty made him feel emotionally vulnerable. The recognition and encouragement that Dayton received for his artistic talents from friends, fellow readers and the staff involved with the zine and Youth Centre, made him feel that the zine was a "good feeling at a bad time." Dayton discussed the relationships he had with Youth Centre staff and fellow contributors as nurturing, albeit difficult on occasion. The actual contributions to the zine Dayton revealed were secondary to the relationships he developed and to the safety he felt while at the Youth Centre.

Dice does not consider herself a writer now, nor did she consider herself a writer when she worked on *Mined Minds* (although she did recall doing some "journalistic" writings, on such topics as drug and alcohol use. The sharing of her written pieces, the zine's publication and the reading of other people's writings were highlights from the zine experience for Dice. Dice recognized that the knowledge that she was not alone in her thoughts and experiences somehow made her own life seem "less crappy." Dice can recall that on more than one occasion that, even when fighting with her friends or family, she would go to the Youth Centre, pick up a readily-available copy of the zine, sit on the couch and read it uninterrupted. Others would see that she was reading and respect her
silence. Dice also comments on the fact that, although she is a conservative speaker and someone who does not readily express her deepest feelings, she could process her own feelings by reading about the experiences of others. Comparing and contrasting her life with those of her peers was an important piece for Dice. It allowed her to make sense of her own world at her own pace.

"Live to learn, learn to live: Self-Esteem"

It has been argued that there are numerable ways in which to teach and mentor self-esteem, which include showing the individual unconditional positive self-regard (Branden, 1985). It involves letting the individual know that you care about them, accept them and approve of them regardless of what it is they do. This does not mean that you accept the behavior but rather that you accept the individual. Such individuals are believed to have a higher feeling of self worth, a belief that they are valuable, respectable and competent for whom they are and how they feel, rather than what they do.

Fish credits his world opening up and his feelings of self worth solidifying as a result of his work on Mined Minds. In particular, he was moved by the other youth he met and their writing of things that bothered them, made them happy, inspired them to make art and self express, and who accepted Fish for who he was. Fish discussed his ego and self-esteem puffing up by knowing that an audience would view his thoughts, writings and images. He also felt that his world view and his opinions could change something for someone who was reading it, as his own world view, opinions and thoughts changed when he read other people’s work. Fish admits that, in the beginning, he felt outside of his comfort zone and exposed but despite this, he continued to explore his voice, becoming bolder and more confident.
Raine states that being able to work on the zine helped her to develop her writing skills and gave her confidence to try new things, particularly in the public eye. Whether she was reciting poetry or singing a song at an open mike night, she said she was never nervous about sharing herself and her developing skills with the Schactto Youth Center crowd. On the stage, in front of the crowd, on the pages of a zine, Raine joked that she felt like a “superstar.” The youth crowds were always supportive and encouraging. Jokingly Raine wondered aloud if she was really any good at performing and writing, because she felt that, at the Centre, she could do and say anything and peers and staff were always positive.

Dice enjoyed working behind the scenes, typing other peoples’ work, and editing and putting the zine together. Dice did recall doing some “journalistic” writings, on such topics as alcohol and drug use as well as assorted interviews with community members. Dice enjoyed working on a common goal with other youth. When a new edition of *Mined Minds*, came out, Dice had a “good feeling, like something had been accomplished”. *Mined Minds* Dice discussed, provided her with the opportunity to work with peers, develop publishing skills, and hone interpersonal skills. Dice said that working on *Mined Minds* provided her with some great work experience and instilled in her a strong work ethic, enhanced her independence (whether working alone or in a group), and gave her a sense of pride in a job well done. Dice continues to highlight this experience in her resume and in job interviews. “Producing something concrete, something that I was a part of that I could share with others”, she stated was her principal reason for continued commitment to the zine.
Zines involve not just writing and self-expression, but also creativity, detail to each page, great effort, and a considerable time commitment. In creating a zine, people look to other zines or magazines and decide what one likes and, then, adopt that style. Pilfering and breaching copyright by getting ideas from other places is part of the reclaiming of media and self-expression that zines promote. Basically, “anything goes”.

With each person that works on a zine, the face of the zine changes. Although this zine has been around for more than ten years, it has gone through many changes in terms of content, contributors and stylistic presentation. Dice discussed the changing face of Mined Minds and how in its early years it looked completely different than it did later. Dice recognized that the youth and youth worker have a huge influence on the layout and the content. For example, the zine was and is still funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, placing on it an obligation to promote the virtues of local youth activities and resources such as the pregnancy outreach program, the health nurse, the alternate schools, the youth workers, the children’s help line, and the probation centre.

*An alternative voice and method of self-expression*

Each of the participants stated they were involved with the zine because (a) they knew others that were involved and they wanted to be a part of it too, (b) for the sake of the monetary stipend allotted to participants, or (c) as a product of their passion for self-expression and having a place to use their voice. Even though the participants were never asked a direct question concerning this topic (the only related query was “what do you know for sure about zines?”), the afore mentioned comments were repeatedly raised by the participants.
jj played a number of roles with the zine over the years, including contributor, producer, formatter, distributor, and recruiting and motivating other volunteers. jj discussed learning a lot about herself during this involvement in a variety of ways. She went on to say that she learned that she could take on a leadership role in a project and motivate other people. She learned that, even though she is disorganized, she could still get things done. She learned that she has something to say and that what she has to say is valid. She learned that when those who don’t usually use their voices have an opportunity to do so, what they say is valid. Simply she stated, “a lot of people have a lot to say and not a lot of places to say it. Mined Minds was one of the places where you could say your piece.”

jj recognized that working on Mined Minds solidified a lot of tendencies that she had and encouraged her to continue making zines. The experience gave her more confidence in her writing, in her ability to get things done, and the belief that, “if you write it, people will read it.”

Fish said that, through writing, his art and poetry reflected his possessiveness, yet also his confusion and isolation. Having an outlet to vent about an idea or experience that had bouncing around in his head allowed him to expel frustrations and anger in regard to society or with his own life situations. His expressions allowed him the opportunity to take on a different persona and alternative voice. Fish credits Mined Minds with providing a place for him to explore other aspects of himself. Fish describes this experience as nurturing his seeds of self-expression and creativity.

Dayton attributes his Mined Minds experience with having taught him to respect the privacy of others. Because many of Dayton’s peer group was involved with Mined
Minds, his published stories, poetry, prose and monologues document events from his youth. For example, the emotional turmoil with former girlfriends was included in his submissions as a way for him to make sense of the experiences. While his submissions technically were authored under a pseudonym, Dayton felt that his identity and privacy could be compromised even with a pseudonym. This may have been what taught Dayton about confidentiality. Although he says that he was well aware of other contributors’ pen names, and could piece together what they wrote with who they were, he learned not to tell who or what he knew, a creed he maintained on the street and, in his travels, and still does today. Dayton learned at an early age that, if he wanted respect, he had to show and maintain self-respect and respect for others. Dayton does not talk about other people’s business, because he does not want others to be involved in his.

In addition, while Dayton acknowledges that he may have learned some skills that he currently uses (for example, time management, working with others and photocopying) from his involvement on Mined Minds, the zine lost its appeal for him after two years. At first, Dayton found it interesting, exciting and new, with everybody really wanting to be a part of it. After awhile, he reminisces, it got stale: same people, same look, and full of the same type of material and contributions. Dayton said he did not want to share his material with the new and expanding list of readers, nor did he want to read and fill his head with what others were writing. He speculates that some of his disenchantment was related to age appropriateness and life experience reflected in the zine. Dayton feels that he simply outgrew Mined Minds.

Raine strongly believes that the main thing she learned from her experience with Mined Minds was self-confidence itself. She recognized that she was a writer and that, as
a writer, she has a certain degree of responsibility, whether that is submitting her work in on time, working with a group or writing from the heart. While recognizing that writing is her own interpretation of the world and her experience in it, Raine states, “you can never be sure how your words will affect or influence others.” She would sometimes, through the reading of other contributors’ words, form her own ideas, think of ways to open up more, express herself more clearly or find herself further discussing topics raised by others. Raine recounts that most of the contributions to the zine, hers included, were angst ridden. Having the opportunity to “get it out” was therapeutic, Raine admits, as well as a way for others to read her work and discuss it with her later if they wanted.

Raine acknowledges that to understand what was being written, you sometimes had to read between the lines. Things were not always so straightforward and what was written was often an opening into something deeper. After all, a Mined Minds writer or artist may be putting clues in their work and they might respond better to subtle support and help. Raine knows this from personal experience. Because the group had a focus and a common goal, they were often able to forget about the things such as pride and hurt feelings in order to get the task done.

Building Self-Esteem

Through her exposure, experience and growing confidence from working on Mined Minds, jj explains, she began to produce her own “perzine.” As of this writing, she has produced more than thirty quarter-sized zines9. She uses her perzines as a creative outlet to vent; to share her writings, thoughts, and poetry; and to create her own “zine currency” (zines are often traded among fellow zinesters and the best way to get a

---

9 5 1/2 by 7 inch sheets of paper stapled and/or folded together
zine is to trade a zine). Trading and collecting other people’s zines affords jj the opportunity to see what others are doing, thinking, and saying as well as how they are sharing ideas. All of these observations play a role in the creation of her own zine. For her own zine, jj says that she rambles a lot, and shares poetry, poetic prose, prosy poetry and other rambling observations. She stays away from the particulars of her own life, choosing instead to focus on more philosophical pieces and assorted collages. jj does not preplan her zines or her pieces; she just picks up the typewriter, starts typing and whatever comes out is what it will be. Her material unfolds and includes pieces on the state of the world and her personal reactions to the state of the world. jj’s decision is a conscious one, a result of having published a few earlier pieces and personal zines that led to her feeling too exposed, vulnerable, silly and young. Her current pieces, she believes, are more timeless and, at the same time, more cryptic and mysterious.

Fish’s states that his experience with *Mined Minds* carried him through a tough and confusing time in his life and he credits it with helping him appreciate his own talents and worth. Fish boldly stated that his experience with *Mined Mines* was transformative and likely altered the path his life took. His awareness of the philosophy of “do it yourself” (DIY)\(^\text{10}\) has infiltrated his entire being and he is convinced of the power and influence that it yields. His zine experience shaped who he is today and what he values. For this reason, one of Fish’s passions is to help others create a space for them to be themselves in a loud and creative way. Fish dedicates his attempt to recreate the zine opportunity for others to Red, as an attempt to repay him for the opportunity that Red created for him.

---

\(^{10}\) Term used by zinesters
I have included in Figure 8, a poster created by Fish for a group zine that he initiated for a group of youth more than six years later. All names of the community and contact information has been omitted.
Figure 8. Fish's Recruitment Poster

Hey! Do you write or draw? Have you got something to say? You make it happen!

And need your art, poetry, doodles, rants, raves, rambles, reviews, photos, comics, articles, collages, opinions and ideas to make a youth zine!

If you just want to drop off one or two submissions — that's great! If you want to be more involved in making the zine happen — that's great too!
VI. REFLECTING THE LIGHT OUTWARDS: EXTERNAL IMPACTS

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us"
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Three words come to mind when I think about my personal experience with zines, the thing (physical production, meaning cutting, pasting, photocopying, and typesetting); the place (a Youth Centre, church basement, board room or, even, my kitchen table); and, most importantly, the people. When I asked each of the participants what stands out for them when they think of their zine experiences, their stories and memories highlighted the people and the relationships with fellow zinesters and Youth Centre staff. They also discussed taking charge and discussing what was important for them in a section I refer to as “don’t just see the media; be the media.” Participants reflected on their growth and movement away from the zine and the importance they felt to be able to give through the retelling of their own experience, in effect acting as teachers to others. This chapter highlights these common themes including a participant’s poem and a collage I created from the collected words in answer to the question “What comes to mind when you think about zines”?

People

People play an important role in the memories of the participants, be they their fellow zine makers, production assistants, friend or foe. In the same breath that Raine recounts being fourteen at the time she started with the zine, the names of other zine participants roll off her lips and she finds herself pondering where they are now and what they are doing. Raine acknowledges that she was raised in a loving and supportive family, but that the Schactto Youth Centre and her fellow zinesters are an extension of
her family. They not only provided her with new experiences, but also gave her a safe and supportive outlet to explore her interests and talents.

The friendships that Dayton forged during his *Mined Minds* experience were as significant then as they are now. While Dayton does not make a conscious effort to stay in touch with friends and acquaintances, largely due to cost, time, changes and frequent moves, he does not hesitate to ask after them. During the telling of his experience with *Mined Minds*, Dayton happily pointed out the efforts and dedication he remembers that other contributors put into the zine. Even while he was wrapped up in his own survival, he was aware, respectful and proud of other zine contributors, even those of his ex-girlfriends.

When thinking about his *Mined Minds* experience, Fish recalls some of the people he met. Some are still in his life today; others, while not in touch, or not alive, are important parts of his memories. He believes that they helped to shape who he is now. When Fish wonders aloud about how he became a youth worker, he remembers Red, the founding member of the zine. Fish remembers Red as seeing things that were not working in the world and wanting to fix them. Through his determination, Red helped bring into reality a vision of a zine by youth and for youth; a “place” for youth to say what they want to say, and a place for youth to share their thoughts and talents with the world. Red died just before the first issue was printed. Fish states that he does not know the specifics, just that Red died of an overdose and he was around twenty years old. Red’s influence on Fish was extremely profound. Red came to Fish’s hometown and shook the place up a bit, creating possibilities and connections that Fish says he hadn’t
considered before. Red’s vision made Fish feel like he was making a difference and that the world could change just by sharing ideas and thoughts.

Dice recognized that for her, *Mined Minds* meetings provided the opportunity for friends and new acquaintances to hang out and visit. It gave her a focus that was somewhat distracting from the experiences of her day-to-day as well as a sounding board for her to process those same experiences, or at least listen while others processed. As Dice put it, “When the right people are involved, and when people really care about what they are doing and they put effort into what they are doing, there is a lot of fun, there is a lot of learning and there is impact on people’s lives.”

jj states that, as a teen, she was very self-aware; perhaps even self-absorbed. Reading other people’s material encouraged her to see the worth of what others had to say and afforded her the opportunity to connect with peers. When jj discusses relationships in the context of her *Mined Minds* experience, she credits her past experience and learning with having had a direct impact on her present and even future friends and associates. jj says that her work on the *Mined Minds* taught her to work with others, to understand and share responsibilities, and to ensure that everyone was involved as much as they wanted to be but not more than they wanted to be. jj is currently working on the fifth issue of the collaborative online zine, *RadioFreeMercury* with fellow online members living in England, Quebec, New York and Germany. Like the saying, “there are no strangers, only friends I have not met yet,” jj directly relates her experience with *Minded Minds* with having prepared her to put together a zine with people whom she has not met face to face, but who are fast becoming friends through their shared passion and vision.
Relationships

The ability to develop and sustain healthy, positive and supportive relationships is a lifelong challenge for many individuals. For teenagers, the development of positive and supportive relationships is extremely challenging, as teenagers explore and experiment with a variety of attitudes and behaviours. The *Mined Minds* experience meant different things to different people, but the five participants in this study discussed in detail the deep connection that they felt with the other contributors on the zine, their peers “hanging out” at the Youth Centre, the youth worker and the other Youth Centre staff.

Raine emphasized the support and love that she felt while at the Youth Centre and through her involvement with the zine: “It is important to have a place to go other than home, a place full of support and people that you know, who know you and care about you. I always felt the love when I was at the Youth Centre, or with Youth Centre staff. It really helped me to accept me, wanna be me and be the best me I could be.” As a teen she did not think of the centre or the zine in this way, but she now credits this experience as having kept her out of trouble, grounded, and safe.

Raine recounts a near death experience she had at the hands in a gunshooting. That experience, while frightening, was not beyond words. Raine captured that experience in a poem and shared it with *Mined Minds* readers. It is included below.

The Awakening

We lay on the ground
Waiting
The next shot we know will sound again
Then
I hear a scream
I edge my way towards the window
A red light shines against my cheek
The whole world flashes before me
Raine says that the impact of her choices, what she was doing in her life and where she might end up if she stayed on her current path was obvious after the incident. The experience was a wake up call and her willingness to write about it and publish it, by the fact that reading it might help others who related to it, resulted in a profound turnaround. While the experience itself was a terrible thing and Raine believed she could have died, she calmly states that sometimes it takes a terrible thing to wake you up.

jj’s involvement with the zine introduced her to a wide group of acquaintances. While she worked with other contributors, and sometimes even found herself taking on a leadership role, some of the most memorable relationships she developed at that time were with the Youth Centre and zine staff. It was these relationships that she remembers and reflects on as playing a positive and supportive role on her journey through adolescence. Reading other people’s stories and working with many others on the zine, jj says she got to know a large group “of kids” in a way that she would not otherwise and that she was able to realize that her struggles were not isolated. Working together on a common zine allowed jj to transcend her differences and focus on the commonality she shared with fellow zinesters.

Dice’s involvement with Mined Minds and her years at the Youth Centre coincided with some very turbulent times. Dice comments on the fact that she always enjoyed reading other people’s work and could relate to it. Dice believed that through her reading of other people’s experiences, she was more able to and willing to talk about...
her own circumstances. Dice’s relationship with the Youth Centre staff, youth outreach worker and some of her peers provided her an outlet to communicate aspects of her personal life challenges and to locate and access the services that she needed. Dice comments that having the contacts she made through the zine “meant the world to her” and she has often wondered where she would be and how things could have gone for her if she had not become involved.

The relationships that Dayton developed and nurtured through his *Mind Minds* involvement stand out for him more than his contributions to the zine itself. These relationships, some of which are still active today, remain a significant and important part of his history. *Mined Minds* provided the opportunity for Dayton to interact and meet new people on safe and neutral territory as well as a time to interact with his regular friends without the presence of alcohol and drugs. Dayton reminisces about another young man who also worked on the zine, but whom he did not know well, who committed suicide. This young man drew and gave his girlfriend a picture that he was going to submit to the zine. That memory still touches Dayton. A seemingly casual moment, a simple gift which endeared itself to Dayton because kindnesses were rare and memorable occurrences for him at that time. When Dayton thinks of *Mined Minds* and what it means to him, he names individuals, significant people, other youth as well as Schactto Youth Centre staff who believed in him, supported him, and treated him with respect and kindness all those many years ago.

Fish described his experience with *Mined Minds* as, “amazing and incredibly chaotic and organic.” Fish felt that he was a very normal, everyday, ordinary type of geek and everyone else was something more: punks, goths, skaters, hippies, beats, punks
and the like. Connecting with fellow zinesters at the Youth Centre and through the zine enabled Fish to experience the world in a way that these other people saw and experienced the world. It connected him with other people who seemed alive and invigorating. Camaraderie and friendship developed so that these people who once seemed so strange became important parts of his life. Their isolated stories wove into Fish's own stories and interpretations. "Creative camaraderie is the best stuff out there," said Fish. "I feel so much more alive when I am surrounded by a small group of peers--making something--creating something--making it happen--putting all our pieces and energy into that crazy stew. There are few things better. I still look for it. I still crave it."

Fish commented on the exceptional amount of work that the youth worker had to do behind the scenes in order to get the zine up and running and to continue to run smoothly. All the while, the youth worker, C. Hair, made them feel that the youth were in charge and making things happen. Even though Fish did not remember spending a lot of time with C. Hair, he said that he is aware that when he is working with other youth groups who are creating zines, he recognizes himself acting and saying things that he knows C. Hair said and did. The people Fish met through his Mined Minds experience

11 Punks: people who publicly display anti-authority, independent, and anarchistic philosophies, often accompanied with piercing, tattoos, dyed hair, and spiked accessories. Often with a fondness for "do it yourself" "punk" music.
Goths: People who celebrate darkness and drama and death. Often with piercings, tattoos, dark clothing, dark hair dye, and dramatic make up.
Skaters: People who enjoy skateboarding and participate in the skateboarding sub-culture.
Hippies: peaceful and free spirited folk who believe in non-intrusive relations with all peoples, animals, and the planet in general. Hippies tend to dress very simply, wear hand crafted simple jewelry, and dreadlocks or natural hair. They are often working towards a social cause such as environmentalism.
Beats: People involved with beatnik culture, a la Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. They wear simple dark clothing and participate in events related to Jazz, coffee, poetry readings and, individuality. They value the freedom to pursue passion chosen over responsibility or buying into "the system".
inspired him and helped him recognize his personal power. The relationships he developed and the experiences he had fed his needs and helped him feel alive. Looking back, Fish credits the relationships he developed with others as helping him make sense of his own life, and giving him the power and the words to deal with some of his once denied feelings of sadness, loss and confusion.

*Don't Just See the Media; Be the Media*

Dice claimed that she most enjoyed working on the zine when she could do it alone, at her own pace. The format of the zine production was such that it allowed her to be a team player, without constantly being around other teammates. It seemed that Dice’s role was mostly behind the scenes. As a self-proclaimed non-people person, she preferred to work on layout, typing, photocopying, and distribution as well as writing the odd research piece. She has kept each issue that she helped work on as a keepsake, a link to her past. When an edition of *Mined Minds* came out she said that, it was “a good feeling, like something had been accomplished.” Dice enjoyed the feeling of making something concrete—something that she was a part of and that she could share with others. Knowing that others were making it, and having a group of friends and Youth Centre adults that supported and believed in her helped her to believe in herself. By reading other peoples’ work, she could drown herself in everyone else’s grief and it made her own life and how she was feeling seem not so bad.

Each participant discussed in detail his or her memories of cutting, pasting, and compiling the zine once someone had completed the photocopying. The Youth Centre board room table, sometimes the ping-pong table and sometimes the couches were also used when putting together an issue. I have created and included a collage of images and
words that I envisioned from the relayed images and words I heard participants use (see Figure 9).

Growing Up, Moving On

For all the participants, their *Mined Mind* experience was something that had a very definite time-frame, a concrete beginning and an end for them. At the beginning, the participants discussed their participation with the zine as something they fell into and that they took up for a period of time in their life. Reasons for leaving the zine were more clearly defined. Perhaps this was expressed most definitively by Dayton when he said: “I grew up and moved on.” Although Dayton said it with precision, two other participants echoed this idea. Fish and jj both continue to be actively involved with zines today, by producing their own zines as well as assisting the development and contributions of others. Yet both Fish and jj view their involvement with *Mined Minds* as having had a clear time frame.

Fish stated that zines are woven stories—conversations taking place over a period of time. His experience with *Mined Minds* allowed him to respond and grow with each issue, personally as an individual, and as an artist and writer. Fish’s involvement with the zine was extensive, starting as a seventeen-year-old contributor, then holding roles as editor, producer, and recruiter. He eventually became a youth worker at the Centre who helped to organize, plan and officiate both open mic nights at the Centre, as well as zine
Figure 9. Collage Depicting "Meeting Place and Supplies Needed To Produce Zine"
production and distribution. Once mentored, Fish said, he is now mentoring. He is now
planting seeds where once he was a small seedling who had been nurtured and grown.

Dice began participating with *Mined Minds* because of her close relationship with
the youth worker C. Hair, who recruited and assisted with the zine. When C. Hair left the
centre and the zine, Dice stopped participating as an active member, although she
continued to read the zines sporadically.

jj’s involvement with *Mined Minds*, which began when she was 15, ended when
she moved away to begin college. Although now living on her own in a new city, jj
continues to create zines, and to share her written material both in person and online. jj
created a vivid mental picture for me with her story about leaving Schactto. She
explained that when she moved away and left her suite in Schactto, in her haste, she left a
few assorted bags of garbage as well as the contributors’ box for *Mined Minds*
participants by the front door. The remaining zinesters conducted a frantic search and
finally tracked the box down, entered the suite, and “rescued” the box. jj was informed
of this later, during one of her rare visits back to the Youth Centre.

Raine’s involvement with the zine was ongoing until the age of nineteen.
Although *Mined Minds* did not have an age restriction on it, often the weekly meetings
were held at the Schactto Youth Centre where drop in access was restricted to youth
eighteen years old and younger. That said, special events and *Mined Minds* participants
were exempt from this rule and youth over the age of nineteen could still attend and
participate. Although Raine was aware of this exception, after the age of nineteen she no
longer went to the Centre to hang out, and her involvement with *Mined Minds* lapsed.
Raine recognized that at some point, she grew up and moved on. Eventually, Raine
moved away, but kept a casual connection with the centre through occasional phone calls and casual hellos when she was back in town. Raine’s parents, once she became nineteen, joined the Schactto Youth Centre “family” by becoming board members and volunteers.

*Teaching Others About Zines*

“What Comes to Mind When You Think About Zines?”

This question was not in the initial questions planned for the participants but came about through a conversation during the first interview and, the one word responses which provided so much insight, did not require interpretation. The participant, Raine stated “good question, I like it, what did other people say?” I felt that the spontaneity and simplicity of the question told a story on its own, painted a picture and was easily comparable with other individuals’ responses. It aroused curiosity in all five of the participants. Rather than identify who said what, I have, using a common zine technique, created a collage of the collected ideas shared through words (see Figure 10). All words and phrases have been included, as many times as they were stated by the participants and as a result may in some cases appear more than once. I have also included this list in Appendix F for those who would prefer to read it in that fashion. The collage is a compilation of the phrases and words that participants stated when asked to identify what comes to mind when they think about their Mined Mind experience.
Figure 10. Collage To Question “What Comes To Mind When You Think About Zines”
VII. MY REFLECTIONS AS A ZINE PARTICIPANT AND RESEARCHER

"The sketch hunter moves through life as he finds it not passing negligently the things he loves, but stopping to know them and to note them down in the shorthand of his sketchbook".

Robert Henry

As I met with, spoke with or corresponded with the five contributors of this research project, I found myself remembering my own past zine experience, my work as an outreach worker, and, most importantly, my own voice. This includes my experience in developing personal strength and finding allies. This research not only reintroduced me to the participants of the zine, *Mined Minds*, but it served to reintroduce me to myself, who I was and who I have become. Although this thesis was intended to be a research project that would explore the impact of the zine, *Mined Minds*, on selected contributors, it also elicited in me much self-reflection and self-exploration.

*The Youth*

As outlined in the beginning of the paper, my work as a youth outreach worker, front line worker and teacher has given me the privilege of working with many teens, often those labeled "high risk," a term that has since changed to "at risk." At risk youth are defined as young people who have instability in their lives (Dubois & Karcher, 2005). These instabilities can be for any number of reasons, which may include but are not limited to the following (Michel, 2005): 1) Youth from an unstable home; 2) youth who have been unsupervised for a significant length of time; 3) youth who have dropped out of school or who have been suspended from school; 4) youth who are in an abusive environment; 5) youth who are in trouble with the law; 6) youth who have unstable structure in their lives; 7) youth who live with alcoholism or drugs in their home or
environment; 8) youth who have experienced significant losses; 9) youth who are rebellious; 10) youth who are in an environment with cultural conflict; 11) youth who have experienced life altering changes (death, divorce, separation); 12) youth who have co-existing psychological difficulties and other disruptive changes in their lives.

Of the youth that I interviewed, each had one or more of the elements of the afore mentioned instabilities. This list though, does not highlight the resourcefulness, independence, resilience, uniqueness and the spirit of the youth that I have been afforded the privilege to work with in the past and within the context of this thesis. Working on this research reminded me of the spirit of the youth, the individuality of the contributors and the resilience and great strength of those whose stories I heard of as well as those young people I have known who were not participants in this study. In an attempt to listen and restory the experiences and memories of the contributors, while working on this thesis resurrected memories that I had thought forgotten.

My Own Voice

As both a teen and adult, I found my voice in the written word. I kept journals, engaged in correspondence with friends and family, and wrote stories and poetry. I had only heard of the term “zine” after a high school friend put one together with her brother. The stories, poetry and articles within those pages were honest and heartfelt. The only other stories that I remember being as powerful were true stories of survival, such as those told by incest survivors, holocaust survivors, Rwandan survivors and so on. The words in my friend’s zine her experiences and her struggle—were as intense and uplifting to me as was Nelson Mandela’s or Anne Frank’s diary. The difference I felt from reading my friend’s zine or reading published diaries was that the zines I read were written
anonymously and my contemporaries and peers. I respected the anonymity of the
contributions because it did not matter whose story it was, as much it mattered that I was
not alone.

The Work

As a young adult, I found myself working for an association with the mandates of
providing life skills and learning opportunities for youth. At that time, I felt youth had
many great skills and experiences. I believed that if I could create an environment that
would permit those youth to share with one another, and acknowledge their experiences
in some way, the learning for those individuals would be great. More broadly, this
expression of youth experience might also influence other teens’ perspectives. None of
the youth I was working with at the time had finished school. Many had not finished
grade eight and, for most, English was not their first language. I chose to use zines in
my work with these young people because I felt that using any words, from their first
language or second, along with typing and putting together a zine using the written word
and collages, could help them build confidence and a level of comfort with language,
computers and interpersonal communication. In addition to being a means of self-
expression, the abilities of putting thoughts in writing, working as a team, and learning
the technical aspects of zine production were all valuable life skills.

I was ill prepared for the impact that the zine experience had on the youth and on
me. I can still vividly remember reading the stories written by these youth depicting
emotionally difficult experiences such as living with alcoholic parents, teen parenting and
the challenges of finishing school. It was powerful. The youth were proud of their zine
accomplishments. They volunteered much time and were able to find local agencies
willing to donate photocopying and supplies. Through the research and writing of this paper, I found myself thinking of all those individuals and youth that I had worked with on various zines, including *Mined Minds*. I began to process the multitude of my experiences with zines, much like I found the contributors who shared their story about *Mined Minds* were processing the experiences of their youth and, for some, their involvement and the significance of the Schactto Youth Centre.

**Zines and Me**

My story and interpretation of the current contributors is wrapped up in the stories, struggles and accomplishments of the many zinesters that I have known and worked alongside, not just those interviewed for this project. Hearing the stories of these five zine contributors has been a gift; it has reminded me of my own past and the possibilities and outcomes that come from feeling a part of something and feeling accepted for who you are, as well as creating something.

My reaction to the interviews and stories of these contributors has been an emotional one. I laughed with them, I respected their choices and I found myself at times saddened by their realities. I was so proud of them for surviving and traveling forward and for sharing their tales with such honesty. In all cases, those I interviewed showed great strength and personal growth and talked of hopes and dreams and goals. And, in all instances, the participants were unsure of what importance their memories and experiences would have for others. The contributors to the zine *Mined Minds*, and contributors to this research have had a great impact on me both personally and professionally. They mean the world to me, but also they mean the "words to me".\(^{12}\)

---

\(^{12}\) Play on words related to the more common saying "meant the world to me"
When I moved from front line outreach work and teaching to my own pursuit of further formal learning in the Masters of Education counselling program, I found myself reading texts by assorted scholars and counsellors depicting various theories and strategies of counselling and therapy. There were those theories that incorporated the benefits of journaling, of letter writing, and of self-expression through writing and collage but, for the most part, these were components and accompaniments to talk therapy. I continuously found myself thinking of my personal and professional experiences in observing the impact of working on a zine and I found myself wondering about the influence, if any, that *Mined Mines* contributors felt about their zine experiences.

I have observed that there are many zines that exist for high risk and marginalized groups. There have also been an increasing number of academic papers written on the topic of zines but I did not find that any of the research specifically collected the stories of group zine contributors and the impact if any that this experience had for them.

Upon waiting for potential contributors to contact me, I grew both impatient and curious wondering who would get in touch. I found myself reminiscing about past zine contributors, from *Mined Minds* and the other group zines I worked on. I found myself having “flashbacks,” which were really memories resurfacing, memories which I reprocessed. I was able to recall individual youth sitting around Youth Centre tables, cutting, pasting and conversing. The memories of centres and participants were vivid, warm and inspiring. I began to question myself, the choices I have made, and my moving away from writing zines, participating with zines, and even my move away from
working with youth and young adults. It has been a journey inspired and supported by the words of those I interviewed.

Finding those participants willing and interested in participating in the project was a task in itself. I found myself wondering who would participate, who would not, and in all instances, what each person was doing, where they were living and how his or her life was unfolding.

During this process, I was contacted by an assortment of past participants, sometimes once, sometimes more. Some were interested in simply catching up, in telling their story but not participating while others who did not participate in the zine, but had been Youth Centre involved. It seemed that the topic of the zine research had sparked others to remember. One individual, who did not want to participate in the study, said that hearing that there was an opportunity to reach out and talk to someone from years gone by, gave her an excuse to make contact. Another non-thesis-participant said that she had been having a difficult time of late but that she wanted to at least reach out and say that she could not participate. There were others who called, wrote and emailed, most of whom I knew and all of whom had been involved with the Schactto Youth Centre. The topic of what importance, if any, *Mined Minds* played in the lives of those who participated was becoming obvious in one respect: the zine was a significant part of their memories and provided a platform from which to “jump start” conversation questions and stories. The researching and writing about the zine experience in some ways mimicked the value of working on the zine in the first place. The zine was a platform from which to start conversations, questions and stories. It also reached people emotionally, not just actively, figuratively, sensibly, or intellectually. Such was the case
with the zine as well; it was more than just an intellectual exchange of thoughts and ideas, it was a creative and emotional exchange. To each of those who made the effort to call, email, or write, despite not being able to or wanting to participate, I thank you. I was that much more inspired and motivated, and I was that much more convinced that this topic was warranted. Zining was, at least in the case of Mined Minds, a community, where citizenship never expired.

*Integrating Personal Philosophy with Professional Practice*

I have been working as a front line worker with children and youth in a variety of positions, such as environmental educator, youth outreach worker, intervention worker and prevention worker. Four years ago I left youth work and began a masters degree in educational counselling because I believed that there was a gap in the counselling field. I wanted to attend to children, youth and young adults in their own environments, at their own level. My goal early on in this degree was to become a "street outreach therapist," working with youth and young adults. It is through the research for this project that I realize just how far off my original goal I have drifted and how important it is for me to return to it. When I began this research I had not worked directly with young people for more than three years. I found myself working for agencies and organizations that "delivered" programs to a variety of age groups, but always from a top down model. Although now I am working as a mental health therapist, the position was designed to provide one-on-one therapy with little opportunity for group work, save for the delivery of psychoeducational programs, with talk therapy as the focus. As a consequence, I find that I have moved away from encouraging youth to find and speak their voices freely in a group setting and to create without an expectation of the outcome. I miss the freedom
and creativity of working on zines, and of watching and supporting those who are working on them. I miss working with youth. I am actively working to change my work situation. I have managed to increase my work with youth and I have hopes to re-introduce youth to group zine work in the community in which I now work.

The youth participants that I interviewed each stated in their own way things went best when neither the youth nor the outreach worker were rigidly attached to the outcome of the zine, including its content and format. Dice stated that “having the freedom to write what I wanted and not having to worry too much about spelling and grammar made me want to do more, 'cause no one was judging me and telling me what to do.” While each participant made the afore mentioned comment in their own way, I have vivid memories of agencies and sponsors requesting that certain articles and advertisements be included among the pages. These included for the most part, information about alternate school programs, the pregnancy outreach program, alcohol and drug information, as well as information pertaining to positive mental and physical health. When comments or articles appeared on these topics from the bottom up, because the youth chose to comment or address these issues or places, the information appeared to be more positively received and more interesting to read. When the information was expected or mandated to be included, it appeared more contrived, less natural and, as a result, less effective. The outreach worker C. Hair, who spent much time with both youth and political figure heads such as the Ministry of Children and Families, the Youth Centre and other local agencies, commented that the original mandate of the zine fell apart when certain items were required to be included. The resource information once put together by the contributing youth with much enthusiasm, thoughtfulness and insight was, later,
no longer read, but simply reproduced in whole or in part, with little commitment to the original ideas. To please the financially supporting agencies, they required free advertising, and they often commented and criticised the content of the zine when it included raw emotion and profanity. Local social workers, teachers, parents and school administrators grew concerned when they read the youth created content and their worries of mental health and personal safety. They wanted to know who wrote what and what could be offered as interventions and supports for these young people who were sharing such a raw and powerful aspect of themselves. In general the youths' zine contributions had an autobiographical element to them, the youth commented on their support workers, probation officers, teachers and ex-boyfriends or girlfriends using humour to mask their criticism and fear of their experience. Originally, the zine's mandate, was well thought out to include comments about free yet respectful speech. It did not impose expectations about what would be included, just what would not be tolerated such as racism, sexism or plagiarism (Fish, personal communication, September 11, 2003). Even this was challenged at times, and Dice recalled the effectiveness and impact that this had on her. An example she cited was a running dialogue in the zine between the youth alcohol and drug counsellor and rebuttals from the teens on the topic of use and misuse. Many youth took the time to write and comment on the topic of some benefits of drug use (medicinal, self-medicating, recreational, etc) as well as the quantity and frequency some believe is required to become an alcoholic or drug addict. The Alcohol and Drug prevention and intervention committee made increased visits and increased contributions to the youth zine "to better educate" the youth. C. Hair stated plagiarism (personal communication, July 2003) resulted in a temporary lower attendance
at the youth centre, lower involvement with the magazine and a general apathy among youth that had once been enthusiastic about creating and contributing freely to a magazine made by and made for youth.

Hearing the participants speak about the importance of working with, being accepted by, and reading the words of their peers struck me powerfully. The interconnections and relationships that developed at the centre were commented on by each of the five participants. Participants spoke of relationships with peers or youth workers having made or broken their connection to and participation with the zine. As someone who supported the youth during the production and distribution, and as a regular attendee at the weekly or bi-weekly meetings, I had to intercept some heated disagreements and was often aware of the undercurrent of thoughts and feelings among participants. There were those youth who worked well together, those who chose not to participate if certain people were working, and others who preferred to work on their own. There were instances when I may have asked what was going on when the undercurrents of the relationships were not always visible. It was only through the process of listening to the participants’ stories that the significance of the interpersonal relationships among participant and youth worker became visible and the sense of community among the zinesters was identified. This aspect was commented on so eloquently and with such sincerity: “I would not be the person I am today if not for...”; “I would not be where I am at this very moment if ... had not spent the time with me that they did”; “It helped knowing that I was not alone”; “I may not have spent much time talking to the other participants, but reading their stories and looking at their drawings reminded me that I was not alone”; “the people who I worked with on the zine, were
people I could trust who made me feel normal and safe”; “For the most part we were not hurting each other or taking advantage of anyone, not like on the streets.” These comments brought to mind the quote that I once saw as a sticker on the bumper of C. Hair’s van, “the most important things in life aren’t things.” This raises the point that the most important thing about the zine may not have been the zine itself.

*Zines As An Approach to Therapy*

What struck me as I read the stories by the participants were the feelings of solidarity among their fellow zinesters. These individuals were cooperating. They were focusing, writing, cutting and pasting. They were making it to regular meetings. I found myself remembering an array of zine participants who had often been kicked out of school for a lack of participation, who sometimes had been labeled (legitimately or not) as having learning, anger, attention, personal and interactive skill difficulties. These same youth chose to work on the zine, either for money, for prestige, or because of an urge to document, write, or create. As a teacher, I don’t remember being taught about how to appreciate these individuals and support these behaviors. As a youth outreach worker, I don’t remember being taught to appreciate the intrinsic value of these beings, to support these individuals and to accept these behaviors. And, as a counselor, I don’t remember being taught that such individuals are whole and complete human beings who are on a path of learning and self-exploration and will find their way. And, yet, in each case, in each role that I have worked, I have believed in the power of the individuals, in the strength of self-expression, and in zines. Zines taught me that everyone has a story and that these stories (told, drawn, or otherwise expressed) have value not just to the one
doing the telling, but the one doing the listening. Through this zine researching experience, I have been reminded of the concept of constructivism, loosely labeled.

Constructivism is the idea of how we fit new understandings and experiential learnings into our old ways of knowing and understanding. In essence, it refers to the meaning of meaning, and theories related to the construction of knowledge versus the receiving of knowledge (Howel & Fleishman, 1982). Rather than receiving knowledge, the learner is actively involved in building their knowledge base through supported experience, skill development, confidence building and problem solving. The learner's own skill set, experience and awareness is expanded and developed over time and meaning is attached through their exposure to the new experience. It is not about teaching a supervised and taught skill, but rather about supporting the understanding and development of the learner making their own connections and constructing their own meaning and understanding (Bruner, 1990). As I recall those youth that I worked with on assorted zines, I recall that almost all had had difficulty in school and had in many cases dropped out by grade nine. These same youth participated enthusiastically in zine making and the many steps that it required from writing to editing. Looking now at constructivism I believe that the format of zine making, that is the creative liberties allotted to zine-makers and the freedom of self-expression, encouraged the youth to work with what they had and contribute at a pace that while challenging, was success building.

There was a time when I did not know what a zine was or what zining was, but I knew the importance of writing and self-expression. When I started to explore zine reproduction, working by trial and error with a small group of individuals to produce a zine, I remember it being uncomfortable and time and energy consuming, but also
exciting and new. Eventually zining became more comfortable and less energy consuming and increasingly rewarding as we tried new things and took risks. By the time I moved to Schactto and was responsible for overseeing *Mined Minds*, my skills and my knowledge of zines was habitual. At times, I must admit, I was bored by the process and by the demands required to mentor, supervise and encourage a group of teens to write, produce, work together and create. That said, I was never bored with the youth, and was always amazed with their growth and spirit. Through this research, I have been able to re-evaluate my stages of learning with zines, my understanding of zines and what they meant to the people who worked on them and, in some ways, have gained a newfound respect for the power of zines. The following collage outlines this (see Figure 11).

While zines themselves are yet to receive recognition as a counselling strategy by their very nature as a writing tool, they fall into the category of “expressive therapy”. Expressive therapy includes the various arts such as drawing, dance, sculpture making, music, writing, sound, improvisation and movement (Knill, Neinhous Barba & Fuchs, 1995). It is an under-utilised yet growing form of therapy that is grounded in the theory that people hold within themselves the wisdom and the power to grow and heal their own lives through creative expression (Dhaese, 2006). Dhaese stated in her 2006 article that it is the merging between creativity and therapy which allows the traumatic events of one’s life to be expressed and released through creative expression. The participants spoke of the importance of self-expression, of sharing their lived experiences and of feeling validated and recognized without judgement when published in the zine. Feeling validated, heard and not judged are each important facets in counselling to assist individuals in overcoming trauma, guilt, blame and anger (Corey, 2001).
Figure 11. My Internal Processing

It's YOUR LIFE.

Hold on tight, feels to get outside.

Take your voice.

FEEL

Communicate

Laugh

Share

Ordinary x, something for everyone.

Discover the difference.

Your Life, not just academic discourse.

Discover the difference.

A Shared Quest: New friends.

Your Life, not just academic discourse.

Discover the difference.

A Shared Quest: New friends.

Nobody

Everybody

Communication

Laugh

Share

Ordinary x, something for everyone.

Discover the difference.

Your Life, not just academic discourse.

Discover the difference.

A Shared Quest: New friends.

Your Life, not just academic discourse.

Discover the difference.

A Shared Quest: New friends.

Your Life, not just academic discourse.

Discover the difference.

A Shared Quest: New friends.

Your Life, not just academic discourse.

Discover the difference.

A Shared Quest: New friends.

Your Life, not just academic discourse.

Discover the difference.

A Shared Quest: New friends.

Your Life, not just academic discourse.

Discover the difference.

A Shared Quest: New friends.

Your Life, not just academic discourse.

Discover the difference.

A Shared Quest: New friends.
What struck me as I listened to and read the transcripts from the participating youth were their clarity, their maturity, their insight and their honesty. They had nothing to hide and, for many, it seemed that they had come to terms with the experiences of their youth. The participants described in their narratives having no money, few friends, thoughts of suicide, feelings of loneliness, involvement in cutting, moving out alone as youth, or dropping out of high school. The emotions and experiences that the participants spoke of portrayed humour, the drive to survive, pride and, in some cases, astonishment. I found myself in awe of the participants’ strength and resolve, as well as their ability to move on and to recount their experiences with the zine and fellow zinesters as positive and influential. Each of the participants acknowledged the zine as having a positive effect on their life; each of the participants connected the dots of their personal growth backwards and recognised the zine as a milestone, a friend, and a support. By saying the zine, I mean the relationships they developed through it and the insights they gained by reading fellow contributors’ work, and developing their ability to share their own.

I found myself thinking of a passage from The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupery in which the little prince talks to the fox and the fox speaks of wanting to be tamed. In some ways, the contributors unknowingly speak about having been tamed and, perhaps, of having tamed others. I, for one, know that I have been tamed by these youth, now adults. I have witnessed them taming others. From the participants, I infer that the zine assisted in the taming of each of them. The passage states:

One only understands the things that one tames, said the fox. Men have no more time to understand anything. They buy things all ready-made at the shops. But there is no shop anywhere one can buy friendship. And so men have no friends
any more. If you want a friend, tame me.... What must I do to tame you? Asked the little prince? You must be very patient, replied the fox. ... you must say nothing. Words are a source of misunderstanding. The little prince realized that prior to taming the fox and being tamed by the fox, he was a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But I have made him my friend, and now he is unique in all the world. Men have forgotten the truth said the fox, but you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed.

To rewrite this above paragraph from the “tamed through my zine lens’’ would look something like this:

One only understands the things one takes the time to get to know, said the youth. Few people have time to understand people anymore, few people make the time to understand one another- to learn, to listen and not to judge. They spend all their time working, buying things and watching TV. But they can’t learn about real things, like what their kids think about and are doing, what their friends’ kids are thinking about and doing from watching TV or working. And so people don’t have any understandings anymore. If you want to understand, pay attention, listen, learn what from others what they think is important. “How can you be understood better?” the youth was asked by the adult, “You must be very patient. You must not judge me; you can talk to me, but not lecture me. You must support me, but not suppress me, you must show me how to do things, but not resent me if I need to learn from my own experiences.” Prior to taming the youth and being tamed by the youth, the adult saw the youth as a hundred other youth. “But by listening to their stories, by examining their artwork, by reading about their heartaches and struggles, by witnessing their personal growth and challenges, by
watching them laugh, and laughing with them, by making them my friends, they are now unique in all the world. People have forgotten what it means to make a friend," said the youth, "but you must never forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed."

It is my belief that I, in working with the youth on the zine tamed them and they me. Taming, in this context, refers to the building of respect and trust rather than intimidation and fear. In some cases, friendships developed that continue to this day. Through the zine experience, the relationships that developed among youth and among youth worker and youth allowed both parties to share a common language, to share in laughter, accomplishment and to value one another as individuals, role models and unique human beings.

In doing this paper, I realize that I have responsibility for the zinesters that I have worked alongside. Perhaps not because I have tamed them, but because I witnessed their taming. In some cases, I believe these individuals, like the fox in \textit{The Little Prince}, sought taming, sought a venue to express themselves. They have contributed to something bigger than themselves and sought to be understood and to stand out among the crowds of other teens. \textit{Mined Mind} gave them this opportunity. In discussing this research with a teacher from Schactto she stated simply "relationships need a purpose" (D. Wright, personal communication, July 7, 2005). Creating and participating in the zine created a product, and that product was the purpose for the relationships.

Raine said that, through her experience at the Youth Centre and through \textit{Mined Minds}, she felt like a "rockstar"; she felt that others were interested in who she was and what she had to say. Dayton joked that he felt famous through his work on the zine. jj
said that she felt that her initial work on *Mined Minds* was too personal and too insightful and that, in her subsequent zine experience, she has not divulged as much about herself and thus made herself less vulnerable. Dice discussed how she would put things in writing if she did not want to talk about things but wanted to let people know what was going on with her. Dice also said that after reading about other people's problems, she could put her own into perspective, knowing that they were not so bad. Dice appreciated the more upbeat poems, and would find herself laughing out loud, gaining a new perspective of a situation or respect for the author. Fish speaks of the many things he got out of working on the zine. He was able to work through feelings that were "not always pretty." He connected with his peers. He also had the opportunity to see his work in print, which he noted boosted his self esteem, as did knowing that other people were looking at and appreciating his art and writings.

Zines are about communication. They provide a chance to connect to one's own thoughts and ideas and feelings in written art or collage form. Communication is also required when working on a group zine, incorporating the variety of individuals work as well as maximizing on the interpersonal skills to negotiate, encourage, comment and discuss pieces and to distribute the zine effectively.

Rather than being passive observers, the youth involved with *Mined Minds* were assertive and participatory, both with their feelings and with one another. According to the five participants, *Mined Minds* gave youth the opportunity to communicate and vent their thoughts and feelings, which they otherwise may have kept bottled up, and hearing the stories and experiences of their peers made them feel less alone and less isolated. Put on paper, youth were able to see and distance themselves simultaneously from the
realities of their experiences. I have read that reality and perception equal reaction (Paterson, McLean, Alden & Koch, 1996). The youth in this project have said numerous times that their perceptions, reactions and reality changed when they had the opportunity to express themselves and to read the expressions of others. Having a voice and the opportunity to speak and be heard cannot be disregarded. The importance of their involvement in the zine, and in response to the question “what the participants know for sure about zines” was acknowledged by the participants and is relayed through the following quotations. Raine recognized that the zine was “… where a lot of things started for me. It’s where I started to be a rockstar. It was exactly what I needed in my life at that time: otherwise I would not have continued to participate.” Raine credits the zine with giving her an outlet for her voice and for her uniqueness which she continues to nurture to this day. Dayton spoke of the energy of the zine and commented that “… everyone that puts any energy into the zine, will get back more.” It was energizing and empowering for Dayton to have a sense of family and community and be accepted and supported for who he was, what he could contribute and what he might say. Dice spoke of the learning that took place for her through her contributions. Dice stated “when the right people are involved, and when people really care about what they are doing and they put effort into what they are doing there is a lot of fun, there is a lot of learning and there is an impact on people’s lives. jj, who continues to be actively involved in zines to this day, spoke of the importance for her of feeling that her voice counted. She had a venue in which she could express herself and said with conviction “zines are not going anywhere, they are here to stay.” Fish who remains actively involved in zine culture by teaching the art of zining to others, believes in the power of zines. “By sharing ideas on
how the world can become a better place if we all do just what we love and let go of the hatred and fear that separates us, zines can change the world. That is what I found and it is worth more than gold.” While quantitatively unmeasurable, the positive effect of being involved with Mined Minds was life changing and life enhancing for those youth interviewed for this research.

The idea that an intervention as cost and time efficient as zines has had such a positive outcome for the youth in this paper who came from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, interests, abilities and opportunities is a force unto itself. The ability to share one’s thoughts, feelings and experiences without feeling judged was not experienced other places. The zine provided them an outlet for self-expression and encouraged them to be themselves and to grow into their best self. The idea that was born from a street involved youth from the lower mainland named Red, who partnered with a youth worker to introduce the concept of a group zine in a small community, changed the lives of these five participants whether they had met him or not.

The idea to create a zine by youth for youth had many residual positive effects. By the participants’ own admission, the zine acted as an aid and a venue for coping with the challenges of growing up. With my counselling training background, I would call this an effective therapeutic intervention.
VIII. CONCLUSION

“'I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel’.

Maya Angelou

The purpose of this project was to interview participants and document their experiences with the group zine, *Mined Minds*. A collaborative youth zine, *Mined Minds* published and distributed through the Schactto Youth Centre in Schactto, British Columbia, has been printing since 1995, as a result of the financial and organizational support of the Youth Centre and its staff. Most importantly, the dedicated, passionate and expressive youth of the community have made this zine happen, and continue to happen, a minimum of four issues a year for the last ten years.

This research sought to identify the main themes and reoccurring themes across narratives among the participants. By interviewing and collecting the storied memories of youth once involved in the zine, I have been able to explore the therapeutic and personal benefits of having contributed, as well as the personal growth of those who participate in the production and distribution of the zine, *Mined Minds*.

Collectively, the participants were involved with the zine seven of the ten years that it has been in production at the time this research was conducted. The interviews were conducted confidentially and, to the best of my knowledge, the participants did not have contact among each other during the research and interviewing. The youth did not know who else was participating in the study. The only exception was Fish and jj, who currently live in the same large urban centre and have had two short visits with each other in the past three years. I am unaware if they discussed the interviews with each other, either before or after.
Given the lack of discussion with one another, it is all the more interesting that there were a number of shared themes among the participants that outline the positive and beneficial influence that their involvement with the zine, *Mined Minds*, had for them. These shared experiences include: increased self-confidence, feelings of acceptance, an ability to hone writing and writing-related skills, and a belief in their professional and personal selves. As was explored in the last three chapters, these by-products are both *internal*, meaning beneficial to the self, and *external*, meaning an assistance to their interaction with the outside world.

There are books and articles written on the “how to’s and why for’s” of zine making which can be found through the local library, bookstore or on the World Wide Web. It is also possible, through word of mouth, to receive hands-on training at workshops for those interested in learning how to organize and begin a zine, both for individual or group use. The limited academic research that I found on zines covers a wide scope, ranging from the nature of fanzines, to how zines came to be, and why zines continue. There is also research on the evolution of zines from paper to electronic format and the impact that this has on the publishing world, as well as on individual stereotypes, identities, and cultural and political struggles of the zinesters. In all cases, it is remarked that, while zines have received little awareness from the mainstream public, they are thought by some to be an alternative and inferior method of publishing. Despite this, each article and research piece discusses the exploratory nature of writing and creating and being part of a zine, either individually or in a group. How youth become involved and stay involved in zine writing and self expression has been explored, but such research
often focuses on the individual youth writing and creating individual zines, not participants of a group zine.

This research was unique, in that it explored a different perspective of zine contribution: the impact on the self. The findings of my research reiterate common themes such as a sense of community and self-expression. In addition to the aforementioned common themes with individuals writing individual zines, those I interviewed highlighted the personal interrelationships and commented in many cases that their experiences with it had a great impact on the direction of their lives. In particular, it gave them a foundation for working on zines and work skills in general. They learned to work independently and build confidence. Often they pursued and surpassed the goals they set for themselves.

In addition, this research highlighted the important role that a Youth Centre and its staff may play. In each of the narratives, the Youth Centre youth outreach worker is a constant figure, supporting both the zine and the zinesters. The Youth Centre received mention from all five participants as being a safe place to hang out and, often, was indistinguishable from the zine. Other academic studies on zines did not make as strong and important a link to the physical atmosphere in which the zine work took place, often because that physical space was transient, or was evolving into cyber space.

A further unique finding of this was the influence that zinesters believed that the zine influenced their personal growth and development. Previous works exploring zinesters focused on the current trends and experiences of zinesters, as opposed to looking back, and asked participants to reflect on their experiences. Because *Mined Minds* has been operating for the period of ten years and the participants of this study
have managed to grow into young adults, their memories naturally elicit reflection on their personal growth. Another difference between my study and the studies that I researched on this topic was methodology and, specifically, the use of narrative analysis to explore the topic. I have personally been involved with group zines in a variety of settings, as well as producing my own zine, and I was directly involved with *Mined Minds* for five years while I worked as a youth outreach worker. As a result, I have my own complex understandings, experiences and memories as they relate to this zine and, in many cases, I have direct knowledge and memories of each of the participants. This unique view has been a challenge and joy to process and integrate into the storied memories of the participants.

Because zines are a medley of individual stories, both fictional and non-fictional portrayals of personal reflection, insight and muses, the research style that I chose to employ for this thesis was narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry, a form of qualitative research, while not an objective truth or an absolute reality, it is based on the belief that reality is constructed based on sharing, perception and experiences, and we make sense and meaning from our experiences. It is place and time contingent, and subject to growth, change and reinterpretation. Narrative Therapy as a form of counselling methodology assumes that the meaning we make from our own memories and experiences can lead to personal growth, self-reflection and change. Using narrative inquiry, I have created an understanding of the meaning and impact that *Mined Minds* had on participants and on myself.

Due to the limited research on zines, and the discovery that has been no research done on the impact of participants contributing to a long term group zine, this research
will contribute in a unique way to both academia as well as the Schactto Youth Centre. While the Schactto Youth Centre has been supporting the group zine for more than ten years through the contributions of the Ministry of Children and Families, to date, they have never done a formal evaluation of their long running group zine. This research may allow the Youth Centre to present concrete feedback on the success of their efforts as well as providing purposeful information to other Youth Centres or organizations that would like to begin such a program. It is often difficult for a non-profit agency to come up with the funding, the time or the staff to investigate and document the long-term benefits of a program that caters to such a diverse population, as in this case the transient population of “at-risk youth”. This research has cost the agency nothing other than the initial costs of allowing the participants to use their telephone, stamps or internet to make first contact.

In addition, this research allows the participants, once youth, the opportunity to reflect and comment on a program that is still in operation. Their suggestions and insight may lead to positive changes to the program delivery. Ultimately, this research, may guarantee the continuation of the program which has, over the last five years been at jeopardy of losing funding.

Many of the factors that make this research unique may also be viewed as limitations. Because the study is based on narrative inquiry, the information within has been subject to interpretation and will be interpreted further depending on who is reading it. It has been subject to the implicit interpretations framed within the interview questions themselves, and then by my interpretation of their responses both immediately within the interview, and subsequently during analysis. The participants have
constructed their narratives, in response to me and to what they construe the purpose of this research to be and most wish to share. You, the reader, also construct an interpretation as you read, based on what you bring to the reading. There is no absolute truth in the stories being told, although those doing the telling may believe it to be so. Their stories and memories may, in weeks or years, be different and may lead to different observations. By being the sole person who formulated the questions, interviewed the participants and restoried the results it my hope that my subjectivity is both consistent and transparent as a result of sharing my own experiences.

There were five participants who participated in this study. These five individuals, while having stories that are extremely valuable, are only a small percentage of the total number of zinesters who have participated in *Mined Minds* since its creation. The Youth Centre that supported the zine has kept only minimal information on the participants over the years - namely only those who they have paid a stipend to over the course of the running of the program. As such, these numbers are not indicative of those youth who have played a small yet significant role, who have opted not to collect the stipend or who have submitted work to the zine on behalf of someone else. The criteria I used to select participants, namely that they had worked on the zine for a minimum of two issues and had a positive support network, has *de facto* eliminated many potential interviewees. A substantial number of contributors to the zine lead a nomadic lifestyle and, even if they did meet the criteria, they would not have been included as they are no longer in contact with the Youth Centre, which provide my means of contacting potential participants. That means that while the stories of the five participants of the research are invaluable, there are many other stories that have not been told. Although the stories of
those not used as participants might have provided additional insight for the research, I faced a tradeoff in the effort and ethical issues involved in trying to locate these former *Mined Minds* youth. For example I could have employed a snowball effect of asking participants who they remember being involved with *Mined Minds* and how I might get in touch with them. As well, I could have looked at the page of contributors to determine their true name from their alias and cross-referenced that with the pay stubs for contribution stipend. Then, I might have sought out these individuals and perhaps located people to interview, but I believe that these approaches would have crossed the line of anonymity, respect, and professional boundaries.

The requirement that participants be nineteen or older may have limited the number of participants as most participants begin working on the zine prior to age nineteen and are no longer involved after the age of nineteen. The age restriction was the main reason that current contributors were not asked to participate in the study. Recent participants who surpass the age restriction may have left the area of Schactto temporarily or permanently and would be making contact with the outreach worker or the youth worker within a year or two, but not immediately after turning nineteen. Eliminating the age restriction to include all ages of participants and, thus, needing parental or guardian consent for interviewing participants may have opened up the number of possible participants and particularly recent and younger participants to the zine. A tradeoff in doing that, however, would have been the loss of the retrospective insights, as well as limiting participation to those current youth who have a guardian to sign for them.
Another limitation of the study may be that the zine focuses on those youth that are able to get in touch via email, regular mail or telephone and it was at the discretion of those youth to get in touch with and maintain contact with me, rather than taking on a more passive role and me finding them, providing calling cards, traveling to them and even advertising the study in far reaching places. The fact that the study demanded returning to and double-checking with the participants to ensure accurate retelling of their stories may have had limitations in those people willing to participate in the study. For the most part, the individuals in the study were settled and had not moved provinces or great distances during the duration of this research, although four of the five participants had in fact moved at least once during this process, but had kept the same telephone number, email address or in touch enabling me to keep in touch with them. This may have limited the number and personality of people who contributed because it is asking a lot of the participants.

My history with the zine may have further limited the number of participants. On the other hand, my "insider status" might have attracted participants, and certainly yielded a different level of interpretive insight that would have been impossible for an uninvolved outsider to achieve.

Although some might argue that these limitations to the study and others might have been offset by having an anonymous questionnaire or by asking questions that encouraged or allowed individuals to share negative stories as well as positive ones, the interpretive depth of the research would have been lost. It should be noted that this study attempted to mitigate this limitation by using open-ended questions.
As this project is only one study, it would be interesting to compare its findings with the perceptions of zinesters in other locations. Two other follow-up studies would include: conducting research while youth are involved in the zine as opposed to going back ten years; and interviewing a cross section of individuals and asking them if they had ever been involved in a zine, and what, if any, influence that has had on their life. The advantage of these options is that there would be less need to travel to individuals to conduct interviews and to maintain contact with past participants.

Two further ideas for research could involve the same basic structure. The first involves methodology. Because I have chosen to use the narrative inquiry approach and incorporated a segment of possible feedback and revisions from contributors, the contact with participants had to last for an extended period of time. There are methods of inquiry and qualitative study that could involve data collection with the individual, but not require any additional contact. Second, it would be interesting to do follow up research on the topic of zines and the influence it had on them in five more years to see how their stories have further changed and evolved. Another way to broaden it would be to look at other venues for self-expression (e.g. street theatre, web page design, busking, etc.) to see if these offer similar benefits and themes among youth.

The practical application of this paper is multi-faceted. From a practitioner point of view, that is from the point of view from the specific Youth Centre mentioned as well as other Youth Centres that may have or are considering a youth zine, this research outlines some of the highlights of working on a group zine. It also offers aspects that a Youth Centre may want to promote such as having regular youth meetings, a dedicated and consistent youth worker staff, an inviting and supportive atmosphere as well as
paying a stipend to contributors. Due to the findings of this thesis, namely the importance and impact of relationships among fellow group zinesters and support staff, someone interested in starting such a group zine, be they a youth or a counsellor, may find the readings highlight the importance and long reaching effect that involvement will play for both zinesters and/or facilitator. Should such a group zine be initiated, the information shared in this research could play an important role in addressing both the importance of being consistent with meeting times, flexible, open minded and receptive to individual uniqueness and strengths. Should the reader of this research include a teacher this paper could also support the development of a group zine in an alternate classroom or any classroom for that matter if it incorporates the belief that everyone has something to say and to contribute; they just need somewhere to say it or do it.

This research, because of its positive nature, can also be used to secure funding as it can act as an evaluation tool by looking at and identifying the positive nature of having a zine from observable outcomes. All the youth in this study are independent. All have continued with education on some level, and all make mention that their involvement with the zine helped to establish and enhance their self esteem, as well as contribute to their work and interpersonal experiences. In many ways, according to the participants, the zine experience enhanced and acknowledged what the participants could do and wanted to do. It allowed them to join as valuable contributors, learn from their involvement, participate and grow at their own pace and in their own way and say what they wanted to say, how they wanted to say it. Such insight for a successful and empowering program can be adopted by other agencies and programs, be they social, health or education based.
This study may also have far reaching implications and insight for other community agencies such as the school district which might find it valuable to host a youth zine, where the focus is on writing and contributing rather than on evaluating effort or spelling for example. Should the school district or another agency adopt such a program, it would be important for them to recognize that, according to the research, one of the reasons the group zine Mined Minds was so successful, was because it was run by the youth for the youth, with the support and guidance offered by staff.

For youth workers who have worked on this project and others like it, I believe that many of the comments and statements by contributors support what they may already have known but did not have confirmed. That is the zine provided a space to build, develop and nurture healthy relationships, and to provide leadership as well as some ground rules about mutual respect which involves truly listening.

For individuals, this research has the capacity to show what any one person can do, and what impact any one person's dreams and energy can create. In the case of this group zine, which is still running ten years later, one street involved youth had a dream to bring the zine concept to other communities. This individual allied with another individual. Together, they began something that appealed to many other local individuals, bringing them together and creating community. This has not been lost on the individuals that I interviewed. Many of the youth interviewed stated that they found that reading the words of others helped them feel less alone. They acknowledged the power of words, the power of sharing and the power of writing. This learning extended beyond the group zine and, because the youth interviewed found the zine process so
positive, they have, in many cases, continued to create zines, teach others about zines, write songs and explore other avenues of creative expression.

Personally, this research has been a journey of self-reflection, both as an individual and as a professional. I have reflected on the significance that zine writing and written processing and sharing has meant to me throughout my growing up and daily living, as well as my role in promoting and supporting youth with whom I have worked in the past. Also, I have spent considerable time reflecting on and planning how I might integrate zine writing in my current professional work as well as in future projects.

Through the process of interviewing contributors and listening to their feedback, I have been a student, remembering what I have forgotten as well as learning new concepts, rather than a teacher or a therapist. The poetry I wrote and the collages that I compiled throughout this process have reminded me of the power and importance of taking time to reflect, to share, to communicate, to externalize thoughts, feelings and to contribute to one’s community.
References


Lapadat, J. C. (2003, May). *Coming out as a (qualitative) writer: Reflexivity, role negotiation, and voice.* Paper presented at the fourth international Advances in Qualitative Methods Conference, Banff, AB.


Appendix A
Selection Criteria for Participants
(a) have been a contributor in at least two Mined Minds zines in order that they may have comparable stories and experiences suitable to the research topic;
(b) are currently nineteen years of age or older so that they may sign their own consent form and release of information; and
(c) have met the ethical considerations being of seemingly sound mind with a healthy support networks available to them in the event that the sharing of their personal experiences resurrects difficult or painful thoughts and/or feelings.
Appendix B

Information Letter to Potential Participants

My name is Miss Mieke and I am a Masters of Education student in Educational Counselling at the University of Northern British Columbia. My masters research involves the experience of *Mined Minds* contributors. *Mined Minds* is a small circulation magazine, also known as a zine.

I have had extensive involvement with group zines, including five years with *Mined Minds* in a supportive position as a youth worker. Both prior to and since my involvement with *Mined Minds*, I have used group zines as a tool for developing a positive team attitude, raising self-esteem and empowering individuals. While I believe that the experience has positive long- and short-term benefits for contributors on a personal level, I feel it is important for contributors themselves to share their own experiences and insights on this topic.

*Mined Minds*, a group zine produced, published and distributed by youth for youth began nine years ago in a B.C. community. *Mined Minds* has, despite turnover in youth workers, contributors and physical headquarters, continued to find committed and dedicated youth to edit, produce, write, draw and distribute four issues a year. I am curious about this commitment and dedication. I am curious about what *Mined Minds* has meant to contributors, editors and distributors at the time, and what it means to them now.

This research is based on more than simple curiosity; it is significant for *Mined Minds* funders, for zine culture, for youth workers and for zine contributors ("zinesters"). By asking youth and young adults who have contributed to share their stories about their experiences with *Mined Minds* and the importance it has had on their lives, if any. I hope to answer the question of what role *Mined Minds* played and plays in their lives, memories and experiences. Also, these stories hold value at a very basic level. It will be one of the first times such stories have been collected and documented by a researcher.

For this study, I will use Narrative Inquiry to listen, analyze and interpret the stories and experiences of zinesters as related to the group zine, *Mined Minds*. Narrative Inquiry, a kind of qualitative research, is a way of making sense or making meaning of yesterdays experiences through the process of telling and retelling stories today. Themes, images, myths and metaphors shared by a number of other contributors will be compared and contrasted and retold from my personal perspective. The process of rethinking and reconnecting events and experiences will provide a series of linked case studies retold from my perspective. Anonymity may be important to you and, for this reason, I will disguise the name of the town, the name of the actual organization, the names of all people involved (including your name), youth worker names and any other names should they come up. I will ask you to choose an alias name for yourself, which may be your *Mined Mind* pen name if you so choose.

Discussing issues and experiences related to your youth may bring up difficult or painful memories and experiences. All participants, including you, will have to identify, prior to the interview, a strong and reliable resource base that they have available to help them
deal with difficult or painful emotions they may arise. In addition, I will provide
information about mental health services in your area.

There are a number of ways that memories and experiences can be shared. In the event
that the interviews will be conducted face-to-face or by telephone, those interviews will
last approximately 1.5 hours and be audiotaped. Email correspondence and regular mail
correspondence may occur and may involve more than one email or letter exchange. All
material sent via email or regular mail will be dated with the time of arrival and will take
the place of an audiotape. The interviews, email and written correspondence will focus on
your own experience and memories as related to *Mined Minds,* and the impact that they
feel it has played on your personal development, life to date, and possible influence on
future experiences.

I will be the only one listening to the audio-tapes. The audiotapes will be used to make
written transcriptions of our interview. I will transcribe the tapes myself and then keep all
the personal information, including one or more of the following: audio-tapes, transcripts,
all written or emailed correspondence, and information linking your alias to your real
name stored in a safe and secure locked cabinet. I will keep the information safely for a
period of five years as required by the University of Northern British Columbia. After
the five-year period has elapsed, the information will be destroyed.

There will be several opportunities for you to review the information you will have given
to me. I will ask you to review the transcripts to correct and comment on it during a
second audiotaped interview. In the case of email or written correspondence, the second
stage of information sharing will be to review handwritten or typed material and make
corrections. All information from all the participants will be compiled in a summary that
will explore *Mind Mind* experiences and understandings. Restorying consists of the
retelling of past experiences through a new lens, the lens of hindsight, time and a shift in
perception. Because I will be the one creating a restoried text from the stories told to me,
I will ask participants to review the final document to decide if there is any information
that should be withdrawn or changed from the final study.

The final document, written into a Masters of Educational Project, may be presented at a
conference, published in a journal article or used for educational purposes. Participants
will receive a finished copy of their own restoried narrative (see comment in paragraph
above) and may request a copy of the entire project by contacting me at the above listed
telephone number or email address.

Although you will have to sign a consent form to participate in the research, you may
change your mind at any time to either stop the interview completely or to change or
eliminate something you have said or written. You may contact myself or my supervisor:
Dr. Judith Lapadat, Associate Professor, Education Program, University of Northern
British Columbia, 250.960. 6667.

If participating in this study interests you or you wish to have more information on my
project, you may contact me at 1.250.962.0251 or at mieke@imaginaryfriend.org.
For more information regarding participant rights, ethical conduct of research or to register complaints about this project contact the Vice President of Research at 1.250.960.5820.

Thank you for your interest,

Mieke
UNBC Graduate Student
Department of Education, Counselling
Appendix C

Biographical Questions

1. What was your experience or knowledge of zines prior to your experience with
   *Mined Minds*?

2. What made you decide to contribute to *Mined Minds*?

3. What role(s) did you play in *Mined Minds*?

4. What age were you during your involvement with *Mined Minds*?

5. What led to your no longer being involved with *Mined Minds*?

6. What kinds of group/team projects, if any, have you been involved in since your experience with *Mined Minds*?
Appendix D

Possible Open Ended Questions

1. What was your experience with *Mined Minds*?

2. Becoming a part of a group at any age can be an interesting experience.
   Tell me about a particular experience you had with *Mined Minds* that stands out for you.

3. How did your involvement in *Mined Minds* affect your life at the time?

4. What were some of the important things that you learned or insights that you gained through your experience with *Mined Minds*?

5. How have you brought what you learned through your involvement with *Mined Minds* into your life now?

6. What kept you participating in *Mined Minds*?

7. What do you want me to understand about your experience with *Mined Minds*?

8. What questions have I not asked that you would like to discuss?
Appendix E

Informed Consent Package

Researcher's Name: Miss Mieke
Address: Omitted for privacy reasons
Email address: mieke@imaginaryfriend.org
Phone Number: 250.962.0251
Supervisor's Name: Dr. Judith Lapadat, Associate Professor, Education
Title of Project: Zine is Believing: An Analysis of the Personal Growth of Mined Minds Contributors
Type of Project: M. Ed Project for completion of M.Ed. Counselling
Purpose of Research: To collect the experiences and reflections of Mined Minds contributors between 1993 and 2004.

Potential benefits and risks: **Benefits:** The collection of rich narrative descriptions of contributors who have participated in a youth zine over a period of nine years will contribute to the growing, yet sparse, research about individuals involved in group zines. Additional benefits of the research will be: (1) to determine the impact that involvement with Mined Minds has had on the lives of select participants which in turn may impact future funding allocations, the development and support of group zines in other small northern BC communities; and (2) to assist contributors in reflecting on their personal histories, what impacted them, what continues to impact them and where they are going. Since youth experiences and contributing influences to adulthood are often forgotten, this research will give young adults the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their personal experiences, which in turn may have a continued impact on the future of Mined Minds.

**Risks:** Narrative research is a process that can change both participant and researcher. Sometimes such changes can be unpredictable, painful, or difficult. Should difficulties occur during or following the interview, I will offer information about, and if needed referrals to appropriate mental health
services. I will also encourage each participant to use their own support networks, which we will have discussed and identified prior to beginning the research.

How was the respondent will be chosen:

The Schaecto youth centre has agreed to take on the responsibility of contacting and pre-screening interested youth who a) have been a contributor in at least two Mined Minds zine in order that they may have comparing stories and experiences suitable to the research topic; b) are currently nineteen years of age or older so that they may sign their own consent form and release of information; and c) have met the ethical considerations of seemingly sound mind with a healthy support networks available to them in the event that the sharing of their personal experiences resurrects difficult or painful thoughts and/or feelings.

Those that meet the criteria, have been found to have information rich stories and have gone over the informed consent package with me, will be invited to participate in the study.

Participants will be asked to:

Participants will be asked to take part in an open ended interview regarding their memories and experiences relating to Mined Minds and the impact that they feel it has played on their personal development, life to date, and its possible influence on future experiences. Should the participants be interviewed either in person or via telephone, the interview will be audio taped and will last approximately 1.5 hours. Involvement through written correspondence may require more than one letter or email. Prior to beginning the interview, participants will be asked to read, sign and submit a written Consent Form as well as identify a strong and reliable resource base that they have available to help them deal with emotions, should they arise. Consent can be withdrawn at any time by either contacting myself or my supervisor: Dr. Judith Lapadat, Associate Professor, Education Program, University of Northern British Columbia, 250. 960.6667.

Access to participant’s taped interviews or written correspondence:

Access will be limited to the researcher of the project and the research supervisor. Only the researcher will transcribe the interview. Once transcribed, interviews and notes will
be restored in such a way that anonymity, should a participant wish to have it, will be maintained to the best of my ability. All participants will have the opportunity to reflect on, read, comment, expand on and make changes to their transcription. Participants will also have the right to eliminate material.

Voluntary nature of the participants:
Participation is the study is voluntary with no honorarium given aside from those who meet with the researcher in person, in which case beverages will be offered. All phone interviews and follow up conversations will be charged to the researcher, who will also accept collect phone calls throughout the duration of the research and writing period. Participants may withdraw their consent at any time and, should that occur, all tapes, notes, narratives will be destroyed.

Anonymity:
Considering that Mined Minds has been running for over nine years, with a minimum of 18 participants per issue, and minimum four issues a year, it may be possible for readers of the finished project, who are familiar with Schactto and Mined Minds contributors over the last nine years, to identify the participants through the information that they have shared. At no point will any of contributors’ identities be confirmed by the researcher. Most contributors to Mined Minds have already used an alias, which they may continue to use, but may also use an alternate alias or their actual first name.

Information storage:
During and after the research, all personal information, interview tapes and transcripts will be kept securely in the researcher’s home. Any information linking false name to real names will be kept separately. All information will be safely retained for a period of five years as required by the University of Northern British Columbia and will then be destroyed.

Research results:
Once interviews have been transcribed, participants will be sent the printed transcript for review. Corrections or comments can be made regarding the transcript in a follow up interview. The follow-up interview will take approximately one hour, and will be recorded and similarly
transcribed. All information from all participants will be compiled in a final document that explores the individual growth and experiences through the involvement of *Mined Minds*. The final information may be presented at a conference, published in a journal article or used for educational purposes. Participants will receive a finished copy of their own restoried narrative and may request a copy of the entire product by contacting me at the above listed telephone number or email address. As well, participants will be given one, but may request additional copies of, their signed consent form. Participant consent can be terminated at any point during involvement with this project, with no explanation necessary, although I may ask questions to ensure that, should a participant have any emotional repercussions as a result of their involvement with the project, if they are connected or would consider being connected to appropriate mental health service providers in their area.

**Further questions:**

Further questions regarding this study can be directed to the researcher by telephone at 250.962.0251 or by email at mieke@imaginaryfriend.org.

For more information regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, or to register complaints about this project, contact the Vice President of Research at 250.960.5820.
Zine is Believing: An Analysis of the Personal Growth of *Mined Minds* Contributors

I have read and discussed with Mieke the informed consent package concerning the study of personal growth of *Mined Minds* contributors.

Please circle one  YES    NO

I agree to participate in the study, understanding that it will involve an initial interview (either in person, over the telephone or written correspondence) that will last approximately 1.5 hours in the case of interview or detailed correspondence to reflect on a series of set open ended questions. A follow up interview or correspondence to review the interview transcripts and research report will also be required and will last 1 hour. This follow up interview will be audio taped and all written documentation from this follow up interview will be kept and be incorporated into the final transcript of the narrative.

Please circle one  YES    NO

I wish to remain anonymous in the research.

Please circle one  YES    NO

I wish that my original *Mined Minds* pen name and relevant biographical information be used in the research. I understand the risks involved in using my pen name.

Please circle one  YES    NO

I wish that my real first name and relevant biographical information be used in the research. I understand the risks involved in using my real first name.

Please circle one  YES    NO

I give permission for the research to be used beyond the project for completion of the Masters program, in presentations, papers in academic journals and/or teaching material on zines and zine participation.

Please circle one  YES    NO

I understand the benefits and risks involved in participating in this study.

Please circle one  YES    NO
I understand that I am free to refuse to participate or to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason.

Please circle one YES NO

Signature of Research Participant: ________________________________

Date: __________________

Printed Name: ________________________________

Pseudonym, if any: ________________________________

Witness: ________________________________

Printed Name: ________________________________

Researcher’s Signature: ________________________________

Date: __________________

Pending approval:

[This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Northern British Columbia. For questions concerning participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Vice President Research at 250.960.5820]
Appendix F

Response to questions: "What Comes to Mind When You Think About Zines?"

Fun humorous emotional peoples own thoughts and feelings
Informative educational but in a good way sad depressing daring intense
Building friendships networking getting discovered artistic real powerful
Clever daring intense real powerful modern informal informal
Collaborative emotional creative modern outlet voice power
Self-determination enlightenment communication friendship
Relationships Friends friendships creative subversive
connected communication collective ranting Ramblings
energy manifesto community powerful enlightening
expression risky
Entertainment, adventurous, silly, funny, team, permanent, art, supportive,
laughter, anger, exciting,