EMU Photovoice Project
ACPA 2011 Baltimore, MD
This project used a concept called the Photonovella as a tool to generate greater awareness and discussion around alcohol in the EMU Fraternity and Sorority community.

Their prompt:

To show how alcohol affects their lives and their community.

Eight Fraternity and Sorority members picked up cameras and told their story.
Since coming to college and joining a sorority, partying has been a large aspect of my life. I joined to meet people, make new friends, and "live the college experience" so to speak. As a college freshman, my education definitely took a backseat. Every Monday you could find me at Theo’s. Everyone went there together and we always had a good time. I rarely made it to my 8 AM class on Tuesday mornings and my grades tanked my second semester. I failed a class and lost my scholarship. Not only did I have to explain to my parents that they now had to pay even more money for my education but deal with the embarrassment of being a disappointment.

It seemed like a great idea at the time. I was meeting new people, I was having fun, and it only cost $1 to get in. Being a productive student didn't seem too important.
As I continued to meet more people, I met a lot of older students in fraternities and sororities that had their own apartments/houses. One place in particular was located on Normal Street. I went there numerous times to party and forget about doing anything else. I always stayed out late and even went out and got wasted the night before my last final of the semester. Final exams are worth a large portion of your grade, and again, seemed to lack importance in my mind.

Ann, Junior
Spending my first summer here as a sophomore, I got to experience the "Ypsi Summer." I was not taking any spring classes and all I had to do was go to work everyday. Every evening I would get home from work, get ready, and go out to get drunk with my friends. It became a usual thing for myself and a friend to split a fifth every evening. This led to no productivity, being late to work, and wasting away my entire day and summer. Burnette's is only $8 a bottle and fit my college student budget. I blacked out for my first time that summer.

There is a point in the evening that after that, I do not remember a single thing. Nothing I said or did was anywhere in my memory. Two of my closest friends and I fought for a long time after that. They said I had become a different person, that I was wasting my life away, and giving myself an awful reputation.

To this day, I still think that Cinco de Mayo was the worst experience I have ever had. It is not pleasant to wake up in the morning and have no recollection of anything you or anyone else did.

-Ann, Junior

Sunday, March 27, 2011
Many times I feel out of place when in some of our main social environments.

I have at times felt as if I was on the outside looking in.

Scott, Senior
Although at times I do feel like I’m on the outside, I wouldn’t want it any other way. Although at times I’ve felt conflicted about my social interactions, I’m happy about the choices I’ve made. They have helped me to create my own path.

–Scott, Senior
This photo was taken because and represents my very first impression of Greek Life. I was taken to a house party on normal street my first week of college my freshman year. This street although empty in the picture, was crawling with college kids all drinking, partying, and enjoying their weekend. This view was the view I remember of what I thought "Greek Life" was originally like, little did I know.

Thinking back, and looking at this picture I now realize what outsiders must think of this view of Greek Life.

Kate, Junior
This photo was taken to represent the damage that "just some wine" has done to my life personally. From the age of 13, I've been drinking wine regularly, it started when there was nothing else to take from a parents cabinet, to my drink of choice at a party.

The difference is that I never drank, "just some of it." An entire bottle of wine would be what I would consume, and the reason why I did whatever it might have been that I done. Bottles of wine would even follow me home, when I was just going to sit and do some homework, and have a few drinks.

The bottle is found laying on the street to show symbolically what just one bottle of wine can do to someone on any given night, and although drinking wine is seen as something that adults do, it can be abused just like hard liquor and beer.

Kate, Junior
This photo was taken outside of a fraternity house on Eastern Michigan campus. It puts into perspective, not only the disarray of many fraternity houses, but also the **priorities** of many.

What is displayed is the trash left behind after a party: empty bottles, cigarette packs, and pizza-the wrappers. This also shows that while many students, especially Eastern Michigan students, **struggle** to make ends meet for school supplies, tuition, and rent, etc., they have more than enough money for brand-name liquor, cigarettes, and dinner.

Partying in many cases takes precedence over school, even though we all attend college to obtain the same thing: a degree.
Continuous wear and tear. A metaphor for the body, perhaps?

Max, Sophomore
I wonder if this is ingoing or outgoing mail...

Max, Sophomore
This trashcan was in the house's study room. I can see how this promotes a healthy learning environment.

Max, Sophomore
I knew I wasn’t going to have enough time to pregame like the rest of my friends so I decided to cut my calories to zero for the day.

Tonight is the first Monday back to school in the fall and we are all pumped to go to Theo’s tonight for the first Greek night of the semester.
At approximately 1:30am EMS was called to the Delta Zeta house.
I was unconscious and rushed to the Hospital.
It is every parent's worst nightmare to receive a phone call in the middle of the night telling them their daughter is unconscious from too much drinking and is on her way to the Hospital.

My BAC was .36. I woke up the next morning with no idea where I was; my parents were just staring at me with a worried and disappointed look.

Sunday, March 27, 2011
S– Mangled, beyond repair ’99 Blazer.

H– A financial issue that could have been avoided.

O– Although things such as cars are replaceable and people are not, there are consequences for all the choices we make.

W– Plenty of reasons this problem exists: Media, peer pressure, perception of society. Being able to drive even after having too much to drink is seemed as “cool”, “okay”, and more often than not, encouraged.

D– Combat those stereotypes and perceptions of “The drunker you get, the better you become”. **Challenge people** when they try to encourage such behaviors. Don’t allow a loved one or close friend make the same mistake so many are making in the United States today.

Debbie, Senior

Sunday, March 27, 2011
Binge drinking is prevalent among college students. It's clear that it can impair judgment, and have serious health effects. Alcohol; it's role in our community, in my family, and in society, has had a major impact on the woman I have become today. What do you do when someone you love can't just have one drink? How do you tell them that you think they have a problem? Depression, anxiety, and the need to fit in are serious factors that account for the reason why we turn to alcohol and substances for a so called "good time". Maybe we feel we have to compensate for the mistakes we've made, the hurt we feel, or for the ever longing need to "fit in.\"
Growing up in a family of addiction, I have been abused, neglected, manipulated, and lied to in every way a person never should. The role that alcohol and drugs has played in my life is not just a role, but the entire production.

I’ve seen almost every drug you can name, the inside of court rooms, cop cars, and ambulances, and still replay visions of domestic violence in my head like something from a horror movie.

I have watched lives become ruins and feelings and emotions become masked by an addiction.

But the role of alcohol and drugs in my life will not continue in the violent, progressive ways it has in my parents. I will not let someone take hold of every action and reaction in my life. I will not hurt those around me with broken promises and negated commitments.
Right now what’s left of my broken family lives at the Odyssey house—it’s a rehabilitation center in downtown Flint. My stepfather was homeless after getting out of jail last year around this time, and this was the only place he could go. He lives there with my younger brother Derek who’s 13, and my sister Stevi—she’s 9.

My mom—well she doesn’t have a home. This is a picture of what’s left of my family and the place where my brother and sister have to grow up. The home in Dexter where I grew up, and the home I once knew does not exist. The place in this photo is a reminder of what is left at the end of a broken life filled with abuse, alcoholism and dependency.

I’ve been fighting their addictions and battles with them since I was born and I know it’s not over.

I look at this picture and see hope for the first time in my life.

Sunday, March 27, 2011
I'm scared from what I've seen I'm scared for my friends who think that drinking constitutes a "Good time."
This picture is not the result of a good time, nor is it a result of a good life.

How do you make someone realize now that at the end of each drink, could be a life like this?

Andrea, Junior

I would never wish this upon a single person.
EMU Photovoice Project

Music by Explosions in the Sky, 2007

Sunday, March 27, 2011
The Photonovella

Granting a **Voice** (Wang and Burris, 1997)

**Youth** Photovoice Introduced in Baltimore (Strack, Magill & McDonagh, 2004)

Three Step Process:
1. Taking Pictures
2. Group Discussion
3. Informing Policy Makers/Creating Awareness

Photovoice and **Alcohol** (Goodhart et. al, 2006)

Used photovoice to complement NCHA data at Rutgers University

Photovoice and Alcohol (Wilson et. al, 2008)

**SHOWED** acronym: What do we see in this picture? What's really happening? How does this relate to our lives? Why does it exist? What can we do about it?

Creating Critical Dialogue

Sunday, March 27, 2011
The Process

Selection of Students
Initially 14 students committed, 8 completed the project

Setting Expectations and Training

Photo Taking

Photo Selection and Narrative Writing

Exhibition and Discussion
Student Process

Open to All Students
A Variety of Students Were Recruited
Substantial Confusion Early in the Process
Not Sure What to Expect
Ground Rules and Expectations

The students created the following ground rules and expectations:

**Ground Rules**
- No chapter houses/letters
- No slander
- No photo w/o consent if it clearly shows someone/something specific/recognizable

**Expectations**
- Be yourself
- Be respectful
- Be REAL
- Cover different aspects of the alcohol issue
- Be supportive of each other
- COMMIT to the project!
“If we wanted a Facebook party album we would just go online and download one.”
Photo Taking

Students Were Initially Given One Month to Take Photos

An Additional Two Months Were Required

Address different levels of Prowess with Photography

Coaching and Follow Up

“I don’t have anything interesting to say.”

Encourage Vulnerability

Find an Artistic Place

It Becomes a Journey
Selection and Narratives

Students met with staff and collectively selected the best photos and the desired message. Utilized the SHOWED method to coach students through the process of writing a narrative.

Students were given little direction in writing their narratives to encourage creativity and ensure a personal message.

Most students required multiple drafts, there was a great deal of hesitation.
Exhibition and Discussion

Faculty, staff and students were invited to an open exhibition in the EMU Student Center.

After the exhibition the Photovoice students told their story and presented their photos individually.

Participants were then divided into small groups for discussion. Each discussion was facilitated by the Photovoice students with staff assistance.

Discussion guides were provided for the students.
“As a team, our biggest challenge was to open ourselves up to the vulnerability. In return we found that allowing ourselves to be vulnerable was an opportunity to learn about who we are, grow by means of personal reflection, and to discover a common ground between members of our group.

From Start to finish, each of us found ourselves experiencing an array of emotions. From hearing the idea, to taking the actual pictures, to finally hanging them up for everyone to see we experienced sadness, excitement, and a sense of accomplishment. Importantly, we experienced this process together.

The biggest thing I took away from this project was that no matter where each of us started, no matter the life experiences we had, we ALL had experiences, rather different or the same. Our community has identified alcohol as a problem and we are willing to address it as an issue.”

Andrea, Senior
Outcomes - Participant

Reactions

“\(I\) didn’t find success until I realized what my story really was about. During my self-analysis, I discovered my story wasn’t about the use of alcohol. Instead it was about constructing a social environment that didn’t need alcohol. My story was the realization that I didn’t want the typical “college party” experience. I had the opportunity to avoid that lifestyle and I did my best to take it. I wanted other students to realize that they have a choice in shaping their social environment.”

Scott, Senior
“I have always wanted to share my story to members across the Greek community because I feel that it is important for my peers to understand the effects alcohol have on you. It only takes one bad night for you to realize the potential dangers that can occur. Participating in Photovoice gave me the opportunity to be creative and think of photographs that would tell a story through art. The facial expressions and comments from the students at the program are unforgettable. I feel that each story that was told impacted someone in the room.”

Susie, Senior
Outcomes - Attendee Reactions

Peer influence was substantial
Students saw more credibility in their peers
The status of the students participating was of note
Rich dialogue

Significant interest in future Photovoice Projects
Outcomes - Faculty/Staff Reactions

- Increased awareness about student experiences
- Getting beyond the data
- Increased emotional affect
- Generated interest from faculty and staff with expertise in AOD prevention
Outcomes -
Assessment Data

Hmm...
Next Steps at EMU

Find a way to utilize the product of Photovoice in additional media

Find more effective ways to assess – possible follow up assessment

Conduct additional Photovoice Projects on different topics
  Mental Health
  Civic Engagement
  Integration of Values
Lessons Learned

Students appreciate the self disclosure of their peers.

The peer to peer messages have more impact than many staff and professional programs.

Collaborating with staff from Health Education was pivotal for adding credibility to the project.

Due to the personal nature of the project, students should be involved in all facets of the planning and execution.

Students should meet with staff multiple times during the photography process for coaching. It is a fine line between coaching and polluting. An unexpected by product was an opportunity to engage students who might need help.
Lessons Learned

Meaningful diversity is a challenge – getting men involved is difficult.

Printing and mounting will either take a long time or cost a lot of money.

Assessment – Do some

Significant missed opportunity.
How to Start a Photovoice Project

Do the Research
Develop Relationships
Target the Right Students
Create a Clear Prompt that Empowers the Student Voice
Give Yourself Plenty of Time
Conduct a Training
Facilitate Access to the Necessary Audiences
How to Start a Photovoice Project

Using the toolkit can be a good resource – see handouts
Photovoice.org
Thank You for Attending!

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