

AXIS

by

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A THESIS

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AXIS

By Matthew Leavitt

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Owen F. Smith

An Abstract of the Thesis Presented
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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AXIS is a thesis investigating the connections between mental health and art. Utilizing a source narrative about isolation and depression, AXIS explores the concepts of clinical psychology through a variety of mediums. This paper outlines the inspirations, processes, and outputs of these explorations. Using Karen Stever's album, "Playground Isolator, AXIS transforms a piece of art used to battle depression and push it into larger scope of mental disorder. The first of these outputs is a hand-bound book using a literal method of interpretation; the second is a series of photographs taken by inspired diagnosis of the previous narratives, and finally culminating in an audio/visual installation.

AXIS was created to take one person's story and posit it within a great field of research as well as create new pieces of art based on the original expressions of the album. Ranging theories from art therapy to variable media, this paper outlines the methods and outputs from origin to installation.

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1 MENTAL HEALTH AND ART

1.1 Introduction

Over 15 million people in the United States over the age of 18 suffer from depression. 80% of those people are currently not receiving treatment for their condition, so how are people coping with these overwhelming problems? (PBS) For many people, years pass by with constant health affects, destroyed relationships, drug abuse, and even suicide. For others, they find their own way through their depression navigating their feelings of sadness and helplessness. Although art may not seem like the first method of remedy, for some, art can be the transition from a dark place to one of enlightenment.

1.2 Conceptual Inspiration

The concept that art is therapeutic is not a new one. Colleges have been offering degrees in art therapy utilizing painting, music, and sculpture. In the same way a therapist may use creative practices as a means of healing stressors in a person's life, people can utilize these same practices in their daily life. For many artists like Karen Stever (, art provides an outlet to free themselves of their past. Another artist, Jonathan-Tucker Bull explains, "People affected by mental illness need something to fill a vacuum in their life" in relationship to his own negative energy; "Art has represented a form of therapy for me and has really changed my life". In 2002, County Hall Gallery in London featured their exhibit at Dali Universe, featuring Jonathan and other artists affected by mental illness. Works such as "Three suicides – Keith, Steve, Kate" by John Belford expresses his personal journey coping with

death. (BBC) These are all examples of how art can serve as a healing process, but even if art is used as therapy, these themes are not always transparent in the work. Albums like Playground Isolator serve as a cathartic tool to help not only the artist, but the audience as well. This type of function of art is directly relatable to my personal art practice and much of the reason for choosing to do this very project.

1.3 Introduction to AXIS, Background

Although art therapy is used as a very specific reference, the intention behind it performs in a similar way to the inspiration behind AXIS. The story of AXIS is inspired by the album “Playground Isolator” by Karen Stever. I met Karen through Myspace in 2005 while she was in the process of writing and producing the album. She had recently moved to L.A. from Canada, where she was starting anew and dealing with her personal battle through the themes of the album; depression, isolation, abuse, and desolation. The 12 tracks of the album complete a narrative about facing one’s own demons and rising from the ashes of depression. In many ways, the album is a treatment for those who went through similar experiences as Karen.

AXIS, is an exploration of art as therapy. Utilizing a variable media approach¹ within a reinterpretation format, the aim is to resolve ideas of mental health through the use of varying other forms of media (aside from the music). Variable media refers to the preservation of media that has ephemeral qualities (Wikipedia). Although “Playground Isolator” is provided in distributive model, these models are not ever-present. The inspiration for AXIS comes from the reinterpretation standards of variable media and the

¹ Within preservation strategies, the idea that certain artworks incorporating an array of media elements could be variable opens up the possibility for experimental standards of preservation and reinterpretation. (Wikipedia)

varied presentation models of AXIS give a variety of ways in which the core content is maintained and remixed.

1.4 Overview of AXIS

The content of this project reflects the themes of the album, taking them literally, metaphorically, and as a remix. The final iteration of AXIS comes together as an installation devised from several phases. The first phase is one that delves into the traditional art of bookbinding. Using both modern graphic design as well as handcrafting books reflect the direct lyrical nature of the music. The songs are broken up into chapters, read as an experimental graphical lyric. The second phase involves direct mental health research. Using the DSM-IV to match disorder with each track based on the lyrics of the track. Therefore, a track concerning body image and perception is assigned Body Dysmorphic Disorder. From this point, the sections of the DSM-IV provided; etiology, symptoms and treatment, are examined closer. Each section gives inspiration to a specific photo that hangs as a visual representation of the album, one step removed. The final stage is an installation that pulls together the first two phases in a new environment. "Playground Isolator" conjures up images of an untended schoolyard, where children once played, but has since been long forgotten. The installation uses the concept of a place that is thought to be safe and lively and make it desolate and uncanny. The environment for AXIS becomes a simple dinner table that involves elements of self-reflection as well as coming to terms with one's condition.

2. AXIS: PRODUCTION MODELS

2.1 Phase One: Book, Overview

The first phase of the project is a direct iteration of the album in the form of a book. Utilizing traditional, 17th Century French style bookbinding techniques and custom materials, a compilation of the lyrical nature of “Playground Isolator” was realized. Each song represents a chapter of a book, broken up by lines of the song. Having the ability to read the lyrics as if they were contained within a book gives a different interpretation of the messages. This allows for a greater emphasis to be provided to the words as a narrative rather than as a song. Segmenting the words from the instruments and beats gives a greater focus to isolating factors I wanted to exemplify. Argument could be made that the inverse could aid in a therapeutic sense with sound being the component. This argument, though valid, does not give way to the direct story of conflict and depression that is key for this project.

2.2 Phase One: Book, Visual

The visual aesthetic of the designs in the book are meant to inspire a gritty tension. The visual style of each chapter is similar, with minute differences. An emphasis on the words was placed as the highest degree for this portion of exploration. Each chapter (track) of the narrative is assigned a different font that I chose based on the feel of the song. Fonts used for each chapter as well as a sample from each chapter appear in Appendix A. All title pages utilize Orator Std. The book is the piece of the project that is most closely tied to the original album, as it is a transcription of the actual lyrics.

The visual aspect of the book relies highly upon typographical emphasis. Within each chapter, the different fonts are utilized with variations of weight, position, and size. For example, if the word “trust” is larger than the rest of the lyrics, is because I felt as if within

that line, this word was key for people to think about. All words emphasized within the narrative are utilized to uphold the primary intention of this phase; to convey the story of transformation of depression.

2.3 Phase Two: Photographs, Overview

People experience depression and other mental disorders at different levels. For example, women are at a higher risk to be depressed. With 25% of all American women having some level of depression. Also, 94% of African-American males do not seek treatment when diagnosed. (PBS) How we interpret our own lives can become shrouded and mystified by different mental disorders. This is one of the reasons the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders was created. The DSM (in its fourth version as of 2011) gives insight into medical and psychological research with information about a range of mental, emotional, and physical conditions. The DSM-IV is broken into five separate axis's (the inspiration for the title of the project) that distinguish disorders into categories such as personality disorders or mental disorders. These breakdowns are categorized by etiology (cause), symptoms, treatment, and prognosis (outlook).

Using the DSM-IV, I took the track list of Playground Isolator and assigned each song a mental or personality disorder. Disorders were chosen based on the lyrics of the song, which are outlined in section 3. A photo was taken for each disorder; etiology, symptom, and treatment of the disorder (three photos per song). Each photograph is titled after the reference ID given to that disorder in the DSM-IV. In the physical installation, these numbers are the only reference back to the DSM-IV from the photos.

2.4 Phase Two: Photographs, Materials

The frames used for the photos were carefully chosen. The impression of an elegant frame references a style of family portraits where life seems happy, but when one digs

deeper and take a closer look, the surface is a façade and a closer inspection of the photograph may show signs of dysfunction. The photographs taken for AXIS provide an obvious dysfunction (but no reference to what actual dysfunction unless someone has a DSM-IV with them). The veneer of the frames is utilized to draw the audience in and take a closer look at the images that obviously push against the aesthetic of the photographs. The frames used are standard 4 x 6 frames.

3. AXIS CONNECTIVITY: PHOTOGRAPHS & DISORDERS

3.1 Diagnosing Music : Overview

The following section outlines 3 major components; the lyrical inspiration and connection from lyric to disorder, the DSM-IV descriptions for that specific disorder, and the explanation of photographs in relation to those descriptions. The inspirations of the photos are distinctly representation of the disorders from which they are assigned, but the methodology used for the subject of the photographs varied. Some photos were taken with a literal framework (i.e. if the disorder speaks out distortion, the photo may be distorted). Other photos were taken metaphorically.

3.2 SICKO - Major Depressive Disorder, "296.33"

Major Depressive Disorder was chosen for SICKO as an overarching theme. The album very much deals with depression, escaping those feelings, and coming to terms with one's sources of depression. SICKO starts off the album expressing someone who feels stagnant, "I haven't moved from this room for a long time". SICKO also sets the mood for the "sicknesses" or disorders that will ensue for the rest of the photos and diagnoses.

Etiology: Research has shown that depression is influenced by both biological and environmental factors. Studies show that first-degree relatives of people with depression have a higher incidence of the illness, whether they are raised with this relative or not, supporting the influence of biological factors. Situational factors, if nothing else, can exacerbate a depressive disorder in significant ways. Examples of these factors would include lack of a support system, stress, illness in self or loved one, legal difficulties, financial struggles, and job problems. These factors can be cyclical in that they can worsen the symptoms and act as symptoms themselves. (AllPsych)

Etiology Photograph: The first thing I think of when hearing depression is a person sitting alone with their hands cupping their face, a darkness surrounding them, and a feeling of hopelessness. I wanted to start off the photographs with this feeling, but not this image as it felt a bit cliché. One night, I was out for a run and came across a marsh. The sun was setting and even though the sky was beautiful and on fire, this small body of water felt as if it were not meant to be there, almost like a sickness in the field. I took several different photos and ended up with the current one based on the fact that the reflection of the sky (and color) showed an image of what is on the other side of the surface could be beautiful, but under is a darkness. It felt quiet (much of how I interpret depression), suppressed, and surreal thus giving me my first photo.

Symptoms : Symptoms of depression include the following:

- Depressed mood (such as feelings of sadness or emptiness)
- Reduced interest in activities that used to be enjoyed, sleep disturbances (either not being able to sleep well or sleeping too much)
- Loss of energy or a significant reduction in energy level
- Difficulty concentrating, holding a conversation, paying attention, or making decisions that used to be made fairly easily
- Suicidal thoughts or intentions.

(AllPsych)

Symptom Photograph: The photo inspired by Major Depressive Disorder symptoms is one of the most important photos in the entire series. Although all of the disorders play a part of the mental health of the installation, the focus of this research relies heavily on how depression can affect one's life and often times let other disorders develop. Drawing from the research, I wanted to frame the piece as something people would understand. People

often think of feelings of sadness and lack of energy, so I wanted this to be transparent above all else. The bird in the photo is solitary like those suffering from depression. Even when people are surrounded by those who love them, they feel completely alone. The metaphor of a bird (a creature of flocking), being alone is used to expose loneliness.

Treatment: Treatment can either combine both pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy or utilize one or the other individually. Medications used to treat this disorder include Prozac, Paxil, Wellbutrin, and Zoloft. Other medications can be found, along with their descriptions can be found in the Medications page. Psychotherapy is useful in helping the patient understand the factors involved in either creating or exacerbating the depressive symptomatology. Personal factors may include a history of abuse (physical, emotional, and/or sexual), maladaptive coping skills/ Environmental factors involved in this disorder include, among others, a poor social support system and difficulties related to finances or employment. (AllPsych)

Treatment Photograph: As with the first image, I wanted to start the series of photographs being more direct about the inspiration for the photographs. The image portrays a myriad of colored pills spread across the floor. This image shows both the compound diagnoses associated with depression, as well as an implication of overdose due to depression. Those who try to commit suicide as a side-affect of depression often utilized cutting and overdosing as first attempts.

3.3 Playground Isolator - Phobia, "300.21"

The whole chorus was responsible for phobia being diagnosed for Playground Isolator. The song itself suggests an isolation, which those suffering from phobias tend to do (around their phobia), and specifically had me thinking of agoraphobia as a physical isolation. The verse exclaims, "I wanna be free, I wanna live life, I wanna shake hands, I want

to escape from this playground isolator”. These lines give me the image of someone who wants to go out, express themselves, but does not have the ability, and the fear of what is out there keeps them in a state of stasis.

Etiology: Often a traumatic event is the precursor for a phobia, which may or may not be at the conscious level. (AllPsych)

Etiology Photograph: The photograph for phobia does not feel overly fearful. The plant in the photo serves as a person who cannot come through the cracks. When taking the photo, agoraphobia was specifically in my mind. The inability to leave ones house and integrate into the outside world. Playground Isolator refers to a person who wishes to go outside but cannot, so the plant is also a reference back to that want. The plant was used because of the hope to someday grow outside of the confines of the boards and experience life.

Symptoms: Symptoms include either extreme anxiety or fear associated with the object or situation or avoidance. To be diagnosed, the symptoms must be disruptive to everyday functioning (such as quitting a great job merely because you have to use an elevator). (AllPsych)

Symptom Photograph: Continuing with the agoraphobia themes, this photograph contains a slug that cannot crawl outside the confines of a rubber band. I was camping when I awoke to this slug crawling around and put this band down to see if it could crawl over it. When it hit the edges, it shrunk and stopped moving. For slugs, this is an automatic reaction and defensive mechanism, much like those suffering from extreme phobia.

Treatment: Treatment is often behavioral in nature, with the therapist guiding the client through exercises more closely resembling the feared object or situation. Exploring underlying issues can also be beneficial. (AllPsych)

Treatment Photograph: Treatment suggests that patients “face their fear” to move past the phobia that is creating a roadblock in their lives. The photograph is a sequel of sorts to the etiology where the plant could not find it’s way out of the boardwalk. In this photo, the boardwalk is wide open. The photo is dark and ominous to suggest that even though the ability to go forth may become an option for an individual, the path ahead is still one that seems daunting and, at times, dismal.

3.4 Skin - Body Dysmorphic Disorder, “300.7”

Skin was one of the easiest songs to diagnose based on it’s obvious physical nature. “Taking off my skin just to fit in” refers to someone who avoids being themselves due to social pressures. A person who is persecuted for the things they have done and has changed who they are. Due to this extreme fixation and self-awareness, Body Dysmorphic Disorder seemed natural. Parts of the song give the inkling that a person is becoming aware of themselves and pushing past their self-image problems, inevitable in the “treatment” of the diagnosis.

Etiology : The specific cause of this disorder is not known. Some argue that it is itself a symptom of another psychiatric disorder such as those involving psychosis or delusional beliefs. (AllPsych)

Etiology Photograph: Although the DSM does not offer a specific etiology for BDD other than the coupling of other disorders, when reading about the disorder, it becomes clear to me that people who experience the intensity of focus on their bodies are gaining some of their reflection from cultural perceptions of body image. The orange in the glass serves as metaphor for the cultural fashioning of contorting someone into an unrealistic image. We can see people clearly (the glass) as their exterior, but what is on the inside may

be a painful pushing of what they are feel they should be. The slenderness of the glass also applies to the standards of females in American culture being skinny and elegant.

Symptoms : Preoccupation with a specific body part and the belief that this body part is deformed or defective. The preoccupation is significantly excessive and causes distress or significant impairment in functioning. It is not better explained by another disorder such as dissatisfaction with body shape in anorexia or delusions associated with a psychotic disorder. (AllPsych)

Symptom Photograph: Those suffering from BDD view themselves differently than how the outside world focuses on them. The photograph depicts a mirrored mannequin. This statue is the perfect representation of standard, American, female beauty, the obsession with self-image (mirror), and the anorexia referenced by the DSM-IV. The photograph was taken in Fashion Bug, typically a shop where larger females can find clothing (because stores do not always carry plus sizes), so the irony of the thin, mirrored, female mannequin feeds into that self-image.

Treatment: Because the disorder is most often gradual, taking several months or years to develop, intervention is difficult. Individuals with this disorder as well as any suggestions for medication typically refuse therapy. (AllPsych)

Treatment Photograph: Because individuals often refuse treatment, they live with the metamorphic image of themselves for a long period of time. The image shows a girl getting ready for her wedding, which has numerous pressures associated with the event; body image being one of those. The photo is rotated to show an abnormality with the bridge. Although we do not see anything physically wrong, something is obviously awry, thus the rotation.

3.5. Funeral Mute - Dissociative Identity Disorder, "300.14"

Dissociative Identity Disorder is a fitting choice for Funeral Mute because a Funeral Mute is a person who plays a role outside of one they would normally play. The structure of the song matches people who belong together based on their pre-defined roles, and suggests that people who play these roles may not actually want to play them. The inspiration behind the song was Oliver Twist. The Funeral Mutes were those who went to funerals and mourned the loss of the dead despite knowing them or not (suggesting they do not actually belong there). These dual and split identities easily refer to those suffering from DID.

Etiology: DID is associated with severe psychological stress in childhood, most often ritualistic sexual or physical abuse. (AllPsych)

Etiology Photograph: Dissociative Identity Disorder is a disorder that literally makes one feel 'split'. Taking into consideration the etiology of childhood trauma, the photograph depicts a child abusing an adult. Both the adult and the child have ghosted reflections of themselves (to suggest they are the same person at different stages in life, where the child/memory makes the adult suffer).

Symptoms: The primary characteristic of this disorder is the existence of more than one distinct identity or personality within the same individual. The identities will 'take control' of the person at different times, with important information about the other identities out of conscious awareness. (AllPsych)

Symptom Photograph: The photograph is a self-portrait, flipped upside down, of me before attending my best friend's wedding. On a personal note, I am not someone who dresses up in tuxedos very often, let alone to be in a wedding party. The photograph was taken in a hotel as I was prepping to leave for the wedding. Looking in the mirror, I thought instantly of the song for a couple reasons; the attire as well as feeling outside myself given

the circumstance. Although I was meant to be in the wedding party because it was the first wedding I had been part of, I felt outside my everyday role.

Treatment: Treatment is difficult for a variety of reasons, including secrecy on the client's part (unlike the misrepresentation in the media), making him or her reluctant to seek help, and the difficulty in diagnosing the disorder once the client presents. Typically, an individual with DID will require many years of treatment. (AllPsych)

Treatment Photograph: Because of the time involved in treating someone with DID, it often seems hopeless; endless. The photograph mimics the original style of a reflected image, this time a door. The door suggests the time it takes for one to treat a patient with DID, but the reflection implies that you are not helping just one individual, but their split variations of themselves as well. The number on the door implies a room number similar to one that may be found in a mental institution as those suffering from severe DID may need to be hospitalized.

3.6 Get Outa My Head - Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder, "302.71"

Get Outa My Head is a song that starts to deal with some of the compound problems of the person in the "isolator". One of those factors becomes quite obviously sexual abuse. There are many references to this within the song, but the most obvious which led to this diagnosis was "you go inside, so nice to have a whore and just pin my arms up. Enjoy my disposition". The subsequent lines of "you tore up my insides" references both a physical and mental stressor that lead to HSDD.

Etiology: Some evidence suggests that relationship issues and/or sexual trauma in childhood may play a role in the development of this disorder. Life stressors or other interpersonal difficulties are often the cause. (AllPsych) One theory suggests that sexual

desire is controlled by a balance between inhibitory and excitatory factors. This is thought to be expressed via neurotransmitters in selective brain areas. (Wikipedia)

Etiology Photograph: When I saw this “puzzle game” called “Men are Pigs”, it took me aback. In American society, men are compared to pigs or dogs as those lacking morals, feeding only on their hungers (mostly sexual). The pig on the front of this game is especially disturbing, a twisted vision of the pig expresses an even deeper deviation than the catch phrase normally would suggest. Because of this deeper deviation, it rubbed me the wrong way and took me a level further. In connection with HSDD, a childhood trauma (puzzle game) relating to sexual deviation references the amount of child abuse disproportionately caused by males. These two factors are what inspired the etiology of HSDD, which was a difficult disorder to wrap into a metaphor.

Symptoms: Deficient or absent sexual fantasies and desire for sexual activity. This judgment must be made by a clinician taking into account the individual’s age and life circumstances. The lack of desire must result in significant distress for the individual and is not better accounted for by another disorder or physical diagnosis. (AllPsych)

Symptom Photograph: Finding a subject for HSDD was extremely difficult. To photograph the lack of something has it’s own challenging, but thinking of a metaphor for sexuality and deficiency of desire presented other types of challenges. I had to find several sources talking about the etiology of HSDD and eventually came across some dialogue discussing different types of HSDD that vary in etiology, but with the similarity of the thought that desire is controlled by inhibitory and excitatory factors. These differences affect the symptoms experiences that people have (mostly men). The research suggested more in the area of neurotransmitters as well. These are expressed through electrical means in the brain and the connection between these transmissions as well as the

powerlessness one feels during HSDD drew me to a powerline. The image is an implication of power (neither deficient nor active) and reference to transmission (neurotransmitters)

Treatment: Typical treatment would involve discovering and resolving underlying conflict or life difficulties. (AllPsych)

Treatment Photograph: The doll is a reference back to childhood. Those suffering with HSDD will have to delve into their childhood trauma to resolve these issues. The doll serves as that travel to youth, but also when I came across this doll, it was a bit creepy. It is an old style doll with large eyes and although quaint, I found it having a tendency to disturb me. Due to this feeling I thought it was the perfect metaphor for this treatment because the return to childhood is not always an inspection that makes people feel comfortable even though it is helping to resolve the issues.

3.7 Collapse - Borderline Personality Disorder, "301.83"

Collapse is a song that deals with contradictions of reality. For example, "asphyxiation makes me breath, my vulgarity makes my mouth clean". The entire song deals with these relationships of disorder. Due to this oxymoronic friction, a complete instability is created. For the song, it is a transition point for the person to awaken to the instability in their own life, and for the diagnosis it hinges on the fact that relationships that are abusive and horrific can lead to such a disorder. The lyrics themselves reflect this when talking about screaming, bleeding, debris, self-infliction, and a plethora of other harmful activities. Since BPD covers a lot of ground as per dysfunction, it seemed to be encompassing as well as reflective lyrically and structurally for Collapse.

Etiology: Like most personality disorders, there are many factors that may contribute to the development of symptoms. Because the symptoms are long lasting, the idea that symptoms begin to emerge in childhood or at least adolescence is well

accepted. The negative consequences of such symptoms, however, may not show themselves until adulthood. Symptoms are often present in adolescence and almost always by young adulthood. There may be a history of unstable relationships in the person's life and there is a higher than average likelihood of sexual abuse, family violence, and/or neglect in the person's childhood. This disorder is diagnosed much more frequently in females. (AllPsych)

Etiology Photograph: Borderline Personality Disorder has a huge scope of causes as well as how it affects people's daily lives. I wanted to focus on just a few key parts of the description, mostly on childhood to adulthood. In the photo we have an adult-sized trike. I thought about having someone riding a child's tricycle, but it seemed more true to the affects that a person does not view their own situation as abnormal, therefore the tricycle is one that does not stir up a mode of difference for the person riding.

Symptoms: The major symptoms of this disorder revolve around unstable relationships, poor or negative sense of self, inconsistent moods, and significant impulsivity. There is an intense fear of abandonment with this disorder that interferes with many aspects of the individual's life. This fear often acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy as they cling to others, are very needy, feel helpless, and become overly involved and immediately attached. When the fear of abandonment becomes overwhelming, they will often push others out of their life as if trying to avoid getting rejected. The cycle most often continues, as the individual will then try everything to get people back in his or her life and once again becomes clingy, needy, and helpless. The fact that people often do leave someone who exhibits this behavior only proves to support their distorted belief that they are insignificant, worthless, and unloved. At this point in the cycle, the individual may exhibit self-harming behaviors such as suicide attempts, mock suicidal attempts (where the goal is to get rescued and lure others back into the individual's life), cutting or other self-mutilating

behavior. There is often intense and sudden anger involved, directed both at self and others, as well a difficulty controlling destructive behaviors. (AllPsych)

Symptom Photograph: The various photos for this project come from a variety of sources, some were intentionally taken, and a few were taken without the thought of the disorder in mind, but upon retrospection, fits the situation perfectly. One of these photos is exemplified by the symptoms of BPD. While out with some friends, a man came up to us and asked one of my friends to dance, after refusal the man would not stop, despite the rejection and social inappropriateness he started causing. Now, this man did not have BPD that I know of, but when capturing and reviewing this photo, the clinginess he exhibits creates perfect literal and metaphorical glue for which the symptoms of this disorder adhere to.

Treatment: Treatment for this disorder is long term in nature since the symptoms have been present for an extended time and interferes with many aspects of the person's life. Insight oriented therapy can be helpful but research is showing an increased support for a cognitive-behavioral approach. In other words, the individual's thoughts and actions are monitored both by the self and therapist and specific behaviors are counted and a plan is made to gradually reduce those thoughts and behaviors that are seen as negative. A combined approach may be best, but either way requires intensive time and effort.

(AllPsych)

Treatment Photograph: Because BPD takes over an entire persons life (sometimes without them being very aware of the situations they are causing), they often do not have control over what they do (even if it seems to others that their actions are carefully chosen). This photograph was taken on a naval vessel in the cockpit control room. When I entered the station, I felt very overwhelmed by the amount of controls in the actual room. I started thinking about how impossible it must be to keep track of what everything does, and when doing so thought about the struggle of a person with BPD. I have known people who

struggled with BPD and it is difficult to deal with them, but being in a room like the one shown, it becomes clear that they do not know what controls to utilize to live a happy life. Although the metaphor borders almost corny for this photograph, I think the control room serves a perfect metaphor that a single person cannot help themselves, but rather need professional and familial help throughout their life to aide in the other controls in the room. The metaphor from the initial "Playground Isolator" is ever-present as well, where someone feels trapped, but at this stage in the narrative, they have gained at least the physical manifestation of what feels like control.

3.8 Dream Baby Dream - Depersonalization Disorder, "300.6"

Dream Baby Dream is the part of the album where the characters awaken, ironically still dreaming. When coming from a place of dysfunction, reality can often seem like a dream. Depersonalization Disorder talks about "dreamlike" states of reality, which was a perfect matchup for this, but also perception was key in diagnosing this track. The lyric, "what if this sickness is just a wellness to another nurse" is an interesting one about how a person perceives the world around them. "One persons junk is another person's treasure" comes to mind when thinking about how one thinks about things. With DD, people feel outside of themselves and the way they perceive the world may be odd or unrealistic like within the song. The line, "you're slipping bit by bit, don't take my word for it, there are things that you will have to learn", also felt much like the treatment of DD where one must work through their issues of identity to come to a place that feels like reality outside of a dreamlike state.

Etiology: As with other disorders in this category, an acute stressor is often the precursor to onset. (AllPsych) Diagnostic criteria include persistent or recurrent experiences of feeling detached from one's mental processes or body. (Wikipedia)

Etiology Photograph: Some disorders like Schizophrenia take over a person's entire mind, but DD offers something that is one step back, where a person feels detached from themselves. Because of this, I wanted a self-portrait for this photograph. I felt it was only necessary given my reaction and the description of this disorder. When I thought about how to feel outside of myself, I thought about masks. I thought about social masks that we all put on for social acceptance, and physical masks that we used to hide our true identity. When I thought about physical masks in connection to DD, it made me think that those suffering from DD have the mask forced on them. I had a few different masks laying around, and I chose one that is almost a cross between Guy Fawkes and Leatherface (two famous masks). I have had this mask for a while, and the thing that is most creepy about the masks is its transparency. In some ways, like those suffering from DD, the person is still there, transparent, but the mind of that "mask" has taken over. A disconnection between self and mask (mask being used as a metaphor for the detached mental processes) disallow people to be themselves. Also, a reference to the installation is given in this photo; the chair in the background is the chair that the audience will be sitting in. Although this may not become very clear, the thought process is that people get an eerie sense of feeling sitting in a chair that someone who does not feel like themselves sits in.

Symptoms: This disorder is characterized by feelings of unreality, that your body does not belong to you, or that you are constantly in a dreamlike state. (AllPsych)

Symptom Photograph: This photograph displays the wings (part of its body), twisted and disordered. The sky is bright red and purple, unlike any of its normal states, and obviously high in the sky. The unreality is both literal for the plane (being in an abnormal sky with the body contorted) and for the viewer as the image itself feels dreamlike and abnormal.

Treatment: The disorder will typically dissipate on it's own after a period of time. Therapy can be helpful to strengthen coping skills. (AllPsych)

Treatment Photograph: The last photo in this series is taken of a blimp flying high into the sky. The impression of the symptom photo followed-up by this one is that it was a blimp all along, and it did not see itself as such. A ground shot, showing it floating away (the passage of time) helps it cope with it's own identity away from the violence of the photograph prior. Black and white was chosen to express a somber tone away from the intensity of the symptom photograph.

3.9 Thanks to Me - Acute Stress Disorder, "308.3"

The line "this twisted love remains in me" has a very extreme resonance within itself, which is why Acute Stress Disorder was chosen. When we move past trauma, it feels as if our lives have become resolved, but that may not always be the case, the remnants of those abuses stay embedded within us, much like the symptoms and feelings associated with those suffering from Acute Stress Disorder. The helplessness referenced here; "numbness, no sensation" in the song gives a more direct implication of this disorder as well.

Etiology: By definition, acute stress disorder is a result of a traumatic event in which the person experienced or witnessed an event that involved threatened or actual serious injury or death and responded with intense fear and helplessness. (AllPsych)

Etiology Photograph: Acute Stress Disorder was difficult to think of a way to express a stressor that someone witnesses, but in thinking about just the act of witnessing, I thought generalizing could help in this situation. I thought about how victims in horror films often look through peep holes and witness traumatic events (murder, sexual assault, and other devious acts), so I thought the image of a peep hole could serve monumental to the etiology

of ASD. I took a couple dozen photos of the peep hole, from different angles, focuses, and filters, but ultimately chose this one because the viewer cannot see what is outside of the peephole and can construct their own meaning.

Symptoms: Symptoms include dissociative symptoms such as numbing, detachment, a reduction in awareness of the surroundings, derealization, or depersonalization; re-experiencing of the trauma, avoidance of associated stimuli, and significant anxiety, including irritability, poor concentration, difficulty sleeping, and restlessness. The symptoms must be present for a minimum of two days and a maximum of four weeks and must occur within four weeks of the traumatic event for a diagnosis to be made. (AllPsych)

Symptom Photograph: In this photo, the subject is looking around, confused. He is outside, in a large open space, alone, This is meant to portray the “detachment” from others and public space. Black and white was used, but a darker and more dismal tone was attached to it to express the “reduction in awareness”.

Treatment: The disorder may resolve itself with time or may develop into a more severe disorder such as PTSD. Medication can be used for a very short duration (up to four weeks) or psychotherapy can be utilized to assist the victim in dealing with the fear and sense of helplessness. (AllPsych)

Treatment Photograph: As treatment suggests, time is crucial to resolve ASD. The clock is there to suggest the passage of time, but the hand offers much more in the way of the disorder. The hand is clutching the clock to express the helplessness associated with treatment. I had several different “clenches”, and this one seemingly expressed both helplessness and a bit of anger.

3.10 Shame on Me – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, “309.81”

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, in a lot of ways, reflects similarity to Acute Stress Disorder in its etiology and symptoms. I had a hard time picking disorder for both “Thanks to Me” and “Shame on Me” due to the similar messages in the songs. Both deal with the aftermath of dealing with one’s problems, but the line “fall asleep with one eye open” stood out to me. When reading through different disorders, the thing that stuck in my mind about PTSD was “nightmares and flashbacks”. These events occur when one is asleep (nightmares) and awake (flashbacks), which seemed appropriate for the referenced line. The song also references someone trying to put their life back together after something terrible happening; “every time’s a damn hard lesson when I have to lose the crown”. This line refers to someone learning to integrate back into society; “I’ve got to get it back”, a feeling people suffering from PTSD work through with their psychiatrists.

Etiology: By definition, PTSD always follows a traumatic event, which causes intense fear and/or helplessness in an individual. Typically the symptoms develop shortly after the event, but may take years. The duration for symptoms is at least one month for this diagnosis. (AllPsych)

Etiology Photograph: If one were to look at this photo seeing it as the etiology of PTSD they would think that this bug is not a normal type of bug (seemingly a cross between a beetle and a moth), and that could be traumatic if one meets such a creature. This was my thinking when I was first taking photos of this bug, but when I saw this interesting specimen, I was working with some teenagers who were poking at it with pens and trying to get it to fly around. Some others around me started feeling bad for the bug (which I have a hard time doing because I strongly dislike bugs), but the way people treat bugs (and those different) often can be traumatic. When I extracted myself from the situation, in hindsight, the bug is being bullied while sitting there. This photo is the representation of trauma and

fear as the bug was unable to move, frozen in fear (as is the self-defense of many living creatures).

Symptoms: Symptoms include re-experiencing the trauma through nightmares, obsessive thoughts, and flashbacks (feeling as if you are actually in the traumatic situation again). There is an avoidance component as well, where the individual avoids situations, people, and/or objects, which remind him or her about the traumatic event (e.g., a person experiencing PTSD after a serious car accident might avoid driving or being a passenger in a car). Finally, there is increased anxiety in general, possibly with a heightened startle response (e.g., very jumpy, startle easy by noises). (AllPsych)

Symptom Photograph: After I took the photo that I chose for the symptom of PTSD, I knew instantly that the imprint of the landscape, ghosting itself was the perfect representation of PTSD. As the symptoms describe; a re-experiencing of the same event over and over is the crux of this disorder. Even after the event, the remnants of that event stay there, like the second image in the photograph.

Treatment: Psychological treatment is considered the most effective means to recovery from PTSD, although some medications (such as antianxiety meds) can help alleviate some symptoms during the treatment process. (AllPsych). Exposure therapy usually helps patients over a long period of time; in exposure therapy your goal is to have less fear about your memories. It is based on the idea that people learn to fear thoughts, feelings, and situations that remind them of a past traumatic event.

Treatment Photograph: Although many different types of treatment are utilized to help those working through PTSD, exposure therapy was the most interesting to me. The photograph depicts a sea of different lights hanging from a warehouse. The lights represent the time one must work through their memories to gain control over their current situations.

3.11 Ride of Your Life - Bipolar Disorder, "296.63"

Ride of Your Life was diagnosed with Bipolar due to its manic nature. The song takes a huge increase of energy with almost risky behavior. These characteristics are common for those experiencing the manic part of bipolar disorder. The line, "you'll never find someone like me, no inhibition" shows how the character of the album is experiencing a high that they have never felt before (or within recent history). The depressive part of bipolar is apparent in the former part of the album.

Etiology: Research has shown a strong biological component for this disorder, with environmental factors playing a role in the exacerbation of symptoms. (AllPsych)

Etiology Photograph: Bipolar is another disorder that vertexes on a complex situation of genetics, environmental, and compound disorder. Like many of the disorders chosen, previous diagnoses with depression understandably influences the low points of a person going through the "low points". When doing research the following example of caused environmental factor was given; Because of the nature of their work, certain individuals have periods of high demands followed by periods of few requirements. For example, a landscaper and gardener was busy in the spring, summer, and fall but relatively inactive during the winter, except for plowing snow. Thus, he appeared manic for a good part of the year and then would crash and hibernate for the cold months." The photograph taken for bipolar disorder was inspired this example. During one of the winter storms a tree had fallen in my parking lot. The tree had to be cut down, and the debris left sadness behind (storm as a sense of mania, the destruction as a depression). The literal reference to winter within the example as well as a general notion of "seasonal depression" follows suite in this photograph.

Symptoms: For a diagnosis of Bipolar I disorder, a person must have at least one manic episode. Mania is sometimes referred to as the other extreme to depression. Mania is

an intense high where the person feels euphoric, almost indestructible in areas such as personal finances, business dealings, or relationships. They may have an elevated self-esteem, be more talkative than usual, have flight of ideas, a reduced need for sleep, and be easily distracted. The high, although it may sound appealing, will often lead to severe difficulties in these areas, such as spending much more money than intended, making extremely rash business and personal decisions, involvement in dangerous sexual behavior, and/or the use of drugs or alcohol. Depression is often experienced as the high quickly fades and as the consequences of their activities becomes apparent, the depressive episode can be exacerbated. (AllPsych)

Symptom Photograph: Those suffering with Bipolar Disorder often experience the very extremes of behavior, which can change from day to day and even hour to hour. When taking photos, I wanted to have a mix of literal and metaphorical iterations of photos, and the first thing I thought of when highs and lows and ups and downs was an elevator. Sometimes those suffering hit the top and basement levels back and forth and stop on all different levels in between, but in an unstable fashion.

Treatment: Medication, such as Lithium, is typically prescribed for this disorder and is the corner stone of treatment. Therapy can be useful in helping the client understand the illness and it's consequences and be better able to know when a manic or depressive episode is imminent and to prepare for this. As with all disorders, poor coping skills and lack of support will make the illness more pronounced, and this is often a focus of therapeutic treatment. (AllPsych)

Treatment Photograph: The focus for this photograph lay primarily upon coping skills. The thought behind the photo came to me when I was in a waiting room. I had a Styrofoam cup that I started biting on at about hour 2 of waiting. Those trying to cope with stress often develop ticks (reference). With bipolar, when one is not experiencing their

highs they are feeling the extreme lows unable to deal with their situation. As I picked away at the cup, I thought about the situations that those longing for those highs again might be experiencing. The tight hold on the cup shows some anger and nervousness to exemplify patient's exploration to find appropriate outlets.

3.12 The Last Machine - Schizophrenia, "295.30"

The Last Machine was diagnosed with Schizophrenia in a careful manner. As the album starts to close, the diagnosis of "what is wrong" with the situation ironically does not become more difficult, but morphs in the way in which diagnosis occurs. The line "who controls your destiny" is important for the factor of social integration of those suffering from schizophrenia. For those who dealing with the disorder, everyday function becomes very difficult. The line speaks to someone asking if they are going to let their dysfunction control their lives. Obviously, those suffering from such an extreme disorder like schizophrenia cannot control their destiny, which serves as one pathway for the character in the album. Another factor in determining diagnosis was the hallucinogenic nature of schizophrenia. The song has several lines that deal with how one views the outside world; "pumpkin seeds are centipedes that breed" and "in the concave side of my spoon, I'm bigger than you" speak to this issue.

Etiology: Many theories have been introduced in an attempt to explain this disorder. Currently, most professionals believe it is a result of a physiological condition brought out by a life stressor. (AllPsych) A combination of genetic and environmental factors play a role in the development of schizophrenia. People with a family history of schizophrenia who suffer a transient or self-limiting psychosis have a 20–40% chance of being diagnosed one year later. (Wikipedia)

Etiology Photograph: When reading about schizophrenia, the causes are wide-ranged but often times are explained as developmentally through family and often living with the disorder through childhood with affects coming out more as one gets older. The photograph taken shows a mother and her child to represent the family connection of schizophrenia, but with a ghosted layering to show the distortion of normalcy.

Symptoms: Symptoms of Schizophrenia typically begin between adolescence and early adulthood for males and a few years later for females, and usually as a result of a stressful period (such as beginning college or starting a first full time job). Initial symptoms may include delusions and hallucinations, disorganized behavior and/or speech. As the disorder progresses symptoms such as flattening or inappropriate affect may develop. (AllPsych) It most commonly manifests as auditory hallucinations, paranoid or bizarre delusions, or disorganized speech and thinking, and it is accompanied by significant social or occupational dysfunction.

NEED CITATION Symptom Photograph: Schizophrenia has enough nuances to do an entire medical-photography project on it's own. When I was researching stories of people with Schizophrenia I came across an interesting case study of a woman who developed Trichotillomania (the pulling out of one's own hair) while being treated with risperidone and later citalopram, which gave her developmental trichotillomania. When I read this it made me think about iatrogenesis, which is the malpractice of doctors who treat patients and either mistreatment or other harmful ramifications. I then wanted to reference iatrogenesis through the usage of this case study, thus the photograph containing all the hair on the floor. I have personally known people with even slight depression to be put on medication and dosages that they did not require thus giving adverse side affects.

Treatment: Medication is the most important part of treatment as it can reduce and sometimes eliminate the psychotic symptoms. Case management is often needed to assist

with daily living skills, financial matters, and housing, and therapy can help the individual learn better coping skills and improve social and occupational skills. (AllPsych)

Treatment Photograph: Although today, Schizophrenia is treatment with heavy therapy and medication, this was not always the case. Many medical conditions in the early 1900s were treated severely in insane asylums. Within one of the photos, I wanted to reference this history of mental illness. Although Schizophrenia was not the only disorder that was treated through the intensity of electroshock therapy, and other experimental methods, the affects of this disorder often show an individual as the prime example of “crazy”. The photo depicts the “Experiment Station” on campus (Holmes Hall) at the University of Maine. Although this building was once a lab, I always get a creepy old hospital vibe when hearing the term. I took a photo of this to represent the asylums of the old days.

3.13 Call the Game - Schizotypal Personality Disorder , “301.22”

Call the Game is not the complete end to this characters journey, but it is the end of the isolator album. The song feels like a flashback to a time when the character was in a unhealthy relationship with someone and left (for the better). An alternate envisioning of this track is the future, where someone who has worked through a lot of their problems can now ‘diagnose’ their own situation and leave it if need be. All problems are not solved, but progress has been made, much like many of the treatments for these disorders suggest. Specifically for Call the Game, Schizotypal Personality Disorder seems to have prevalence for the character; an inability to form close relationships with people due to paranoia. Although that isn’t clear within the construct of the song (paranoia), but the chanting of “call the game” implies the end of a relationship due to a strong belief. I may have taken this a bit out of context, but the implication in choosing this was the characters relationship with their own dysfunction due to depression, paranoia, and previous diagnosed disorders.

These extreme beliefs stood in the way of the character living life. The other interesting part of SPD is that it is often coupled with Major Depressive Disorder. Often times people recycle their disorders when they cannot move past treatment. The other almost invisible meaning to these two being connected is the ending chords of Call the Game and the beginning chords of SICKO are the exact same, they loop into each other, much like these disorders.

Etiology : The exact cause is unknown. Genes are thought to be involved, because this condition is more common in relatives of schizophrenics. Schizotypal personality disorder should not be confused with schizophrenia. People with schizotypal personality disorder can have odd beliefs and behaviors, but they are not disconnected from reality and usually do not hallucinate. Hallucinations, delusions (fixed, false beliefs), and loss of touch with reality are hallmarks of psychosis. People with schizotypal personality disorder do not usually have psychotic symptoms. Between 30% and 50% of people with schizotypal personality disorder also have a major depressive disorder. A second personality disorder, such as paranoid personality disorder, is also common with this condition. (PubMedHealth)

Etiology Photograph: Many view bridges as metaphors of relationships (i.e. do not burn bridges). Using this as a relationship to how those living with SPD view the world around them (mistrusting, standoffish, and delusional), I came across a perfect opportunity when driving across a bridge. It was a very foggy day and I had several great iterations of the bridge in the fog as well as clear on the way back. The fogginess suggests mistrust to a relationship within the means of the etiology of this disorder. This photo works well to exemplify the need to clear the fog and reconnect patients on an interpersonal level.

Symptoms : People with schizotypal personality disorder may be very disturbed. Their odd behavior may look like that of people with schizophrenia. For example, they may also have unusual preoccupations and fears, such as fears of being monitored by government agencies. More commonly, however, people with schizotypal personality

disorder behave oddly and have unusual beliefs (aliens, witchcraft, etc.). They cling to these beliefs so strongly that it prevents them from having relationships. People with schizotypal personality disorder feel upset by their difficulty in forming and keeping close relationships. This is different from people with schizoid personality disorder, who do not want to form relationships. (PubMedHealth)

Symptoms Photograph: Part of this photograph is taken literally; aliens. When I read about Schizotypal Personality Disorder, I instantly thought about a photo I took at a concert I attended in Portland. The deformed, oversized alien took me aback on stage. The people at this concert were very inebriated, and the reflection of their mental state was likely similar to the images that were shown on stage.

Treatment: Some people may be helped by antipsychotic medications. Talk therapy (psychotherapy) is a big part of treatment. Social skills training can help some people cope with social situations. (PubMedHealth)

Treatment Photograph: Some of the diagnoses that were chosen were difficult to tie down, as researchers are still unsure of what causes certain disorders. This is very true with schizotypal personality disorder. Research shows a complex pictures melded by environmental, social, and developmental factors at a young age. I had taken several photos for this disorder before I settled on the puzzle. The reference to youth is inherent within puzzles, but also development. When I think of cognitive development, the usage of puzzles as a logical tool seems obvious. Those “missing a few marbles” often feel as if they do not fit in which is one of the key factors of this disorder. Treatment suggests that integration, support groups and other forms of getting patients to “fit in” are appropriate means to recovery. As the last photo for the entire series, the puzzle also references mental illness as a general puzzle of the mind, which is why the wooden puzzle resides in the space of the installation as well.

3.14 Diagnosing Lyrics Conclusion

The heart and soul of AXIS lies in the portrayal of the photographs. Taking a narrative about abuse, depression, isolation, and emotional trauma and pushing it into a clinical realm opens up an intermedial conversation about the spaces between psychology, art (through various medium), and narrative. By giving these lyrics a disorder (focus) of their own, the ability to isolate variables gives meaning to the definitions of their etiology, symptoms, and treatments as independent factors. This breakdown gives a simplistic yet creative solution for further investigating how disorder functions as facility in similar, if not equal ways to “mental healthiness”. For example, the photos in the space, in a different context may be bought and sold a print shop, whereas in the context of the installation, they bring up questions of their meaning.

4. AXIS : CONGREGATING PARTS

4.1 AXIS : Installation Environment

The final piece of AXIS is the culmination of the previous phases as well as all research investigated up until its inception. The installation is comprised of a dining room displaying the disordered photos. A place setting (for an audience member to sit in) with the bound book sits in front of video projected onto the wall. The table, black and oval, sits in the center of the 3-sided room painted “claret” (a deep red-pink color). An elegant black and white wedding cake sits in the center with rose petals. The cake represents a sub-narrative of a relationship gone wrong (see Section 5.2).

Much of my inspiration and research for the concept of the environment comes from other music and music videos dealing with difficult circumstances (that often surround mental disorder).

4.2 Installation Inspirations

Blink 182 – “*Stay Together For The Kids*”: The video starts off with a simple statistic, “50 percent of households are destroyed by divorce”. The lyrics and video reflect a variety of teenagers housed in broken (literally) home and showing a diverse range of emotion standing from anger to sadness. The visuals are gritty, and the emotions are worn ‘on the sleeve’. The song itself lends itself well to coping with childhood depression and feelings that young children often experience. In the United States, 2.5% of children (ages suffer from depression and 8.3% of adolescents. (CITATION NEEDED). Several of the photos reference a sense of childhood (as many disorders outlined the beginning stages of development often tied to trauma invoke mental problems later in life).

Aqua – “*Mama Said*” : This music video inspired pieces of the place setting at the table. The video shows a concrete room with highly contrasted elements (mostly black and

white) including clothing, food, dishes, and décor. The space utilizes a black and claret juxtaposition, but the setup of a black table in a square environment exists as an element of inspiration. The cake sitting on the table with white and black frosting is a reference to this contrast as well.

Karen Boshart – “*Black ‘n Blue*” : Before Karen took back her maiden name, Stever, she was still making music (she has since she was a child). One of her first songs she wrote when she moved to L.A. and changed her name was “Black ‘n Blue”. The song is very chilling in nature, and describes an eerie level of abuse. With lines like “you want your cake and eat it to, be careful you don’t chip your favorite tooth on the blade that I put in it”, and “have you ever tried a fly swatter, I heard it stings but leaves no marks”. These lines move beyond a typical image of abuse. The inspiration for the cake in the center of the table is a direct relationship to both the history of the artist as well as a reference from the film *Night of the Demons* (1988). In the film, a curmudgeon sticks razor blades into the apples in his apple tree on Halloween to ward teenagers from his property. The film ends with his wife using the very same apples to make him and apple pie, with a smile. The thought that an individual has to go to such extreme measures as to sabotage the food that a person eats because their physical and mental health has been compromised is one of extreme desperation. Utilizing the concept of unsafe food bears a dual affect of speaking about abuse but also the unhealthy eating habits those with disorders often experience. A nod to “Skin” using Body Dysmorphic disorder paints a picture that people with the disease of severe body image could view food as dangerous to their physical being.

4.3 Environment, Audio and Video

For the backdrop of my work, it was important to have a media aspect to this project. Moving images and sound can peak the audience interest and allow them to further investigate the project.

The video is a 5:00 abstraction of some of the concepts brought forth in this project, and then put into a mini-narrative. Three characters exist; realization, disfigurement, and affect. Each character, played by me (varieties of masks exist for differentiation), show a process of realizing one's own dysfunction, identifying the problem, and reacting. This is done through a channel of food preparation. In the center of the table, the cake that is in the installation is shown as being decorated with rose petals prior to realization. After the transformation, (which comes from reading the book that is centered in front of the audience member), we see a disturbing reaction of placing razor blades inside of a cake. This is a direct reference to the *Black 'n Blue* track in Section 4.2. The realization for this character is one abuse and mistreatment. This reference comes from the album as well as previous research done on disorder (and how violence and trauma can affect someone). In this narrative, an extreme solution is brought on to point out very clearly how one's dysfunction can lead to a type of madness.

The audio is directly tied to the concept of the video and back to the *Black 'n Blue* track. A set of headphones is placed at the start of the installation, asking audience to put on the headphones for the duration of their experience. The audio is of the track *Black 'n Blue* slowed down twenty times it's original speed. The sound goes from beautiful to haunting and distressing. A cross between the continued affect of elegance and a factor of disturbance is the goal of this piece. As the voice ascends, the audience hears almost a howling, which is meant to push the audience further into the mental space of the environment.

4.4 A Consideration of Variable Media / Remix

Behind the photos, the books, and the installation, is the method of what AXIS embodies. Variable media is the process of defining work outside of the specific medium utilized. For example, projects using first generation Tandy computers may not be able to be displayed in current times, so often times we are subject to viewing documentation of projects rather than the manifestation of the thoughts, ideas, and themes within the project.

These processes are much of the basis for remix culture. Many methods are employed within the study of variable media including; storage, reinterpretation, and migration. AXIS utilizes the function of reinterpretation. Playground Isolator uses the standard audio disk as it's medium (and online distribution), but the contents of the songs do not rely solely on the medium, and can work independently from the medium, which is the core of AXIS. AXIS uses the theme of sort of reinterpretation in several stages. The books are a migration from the audio to written word. Essentially, nothing is changed, a translation from the album booklet into a different form (as a chapter book). The photos are a reinterpretation using a coding system (DSM-IV).

Some argue that by changing the qualities of the origin such as the medium (technological environments), one changes the value and work, but in thinking about the interpretive nature of art, variable media aims and keeping concepts, not specific objects alive. For some work, such as a simple painting, the variable media approach requires a storage-based method, as the core of the painting may not seem translatable. Some would argue that creating a sculpture of Mona Lisa based off of the painting would be an acceptable form of maintaining the spirit of the art. According to variable media, different art functions in different ways according to their original media; contained, installed, performed, interactive, reproduced, interchangeable, and networked. (Variable Media Network) Based on these qualities, how the original work can be preserved will differ. In working on AXIS, I did not specifically utilize a methodology of variable media, but rather

the conceptual framework. The closest paradigm of variable media that AXIS deals with would be interpretation, but often times this refers to the specifically to changing the environment (often based on technological needs). Jon Ippolito, who has worked for years in the field of variable media, helping define many of the contemporary notions gave a lecture in 2002 about remix culture and redefining how we use other people's artwork. Giving examples such as "Shredder 1.0", a site that allowed one to input a website, and jumble the code to give a new view and visage of the site, allows for connections to both variable media and the function of art, in general. (Ippolito)

After the reinterpretation of the original, the installation, and all artifacts become an 'installed' piece of work, according to the variable network; For the purposes of variable media guidelines, to say that a work must be "installed" implies that its physical installation is more complex than simply hanging it on a nail. Examples of artworks with this behavior are works that scale to fill a given space or make use of unusual placement such as the exterior of a building or a public plaza. For such works, the Variable Media Questionnaire tracks issues of site-specific placement as well as scale, public access, and lighting.

Given the information written in "Permanence Through Change", a wholesome look into the world of variable media, AXIS is not distinctly a variable media project, but the thoughts and concepts were considered in the creation of this project.

Conclusion

Narratives have many suggested meanings, and the reasons behind them are not always transparent. Sometimes these narratives are used for simply for entertainment, but for some, they are used as processes of healing. *AXIS* explores the relationship of such narratives in multiple ways. The end product is a scenario, or snapshot, of a meta-narrative derived from the previous and strained through the lenses of clinical psychology. Audience

may not grasp how every element is connected, but the disfigurement of interpretation is conducive to the mental processes assigned to the products of this environment. *AXIS* at its most basic level is a fundamental exploration between function and dysfunction.

5. PORTFOLIO OF WORK : 2008 – 2011

5.1 Artist Statement

When people think of new media, they have very different opinions of what that means, but for me it just means this single word: *change*. I believe that art is not something that you do, but something that just is, and it works itself into your life, and you are able to use the tools and nuances of art practices to provide yourself with a way to engage the world in a critical fashion whether you are working on an installation, workshop, or a photograph. My work revolves around concepts of new media, sociology, and education. Outside of the art world, I am a counselor for the Upward Bound program, working with first generation, low-income, college-bound high school students. I try to utilize my practices in ways that will benefit both of these areas creating my intermedial practice.

Relationships are key to how I function whether in the gallery or in the schools, and how those relationships develop how I see the world and how my work is formed. Most of my work attempts to challenge some kind of cultural meme or contain an educational message. Sociology is not to be disconnected from new media in my body of work, which is a skill-based and conceptual field that I feel tries to raise awareness and create change in a provocative and interesting way, but sometimes lacks the progressive nature of sociological research that I find integral to explore.

I am also interested in personal experience as well as shared and connected experience. How we connect with each other is a huge part of my counseling practice that I find just as important when presenting a body of work that others can relate to. If I can get someone to think about a topic through a different perspective with something I create, then I feel like I have fulfilled my purpose in being a creative individual.

5.2 *Gender Relations*

http://www.wavinghand.com/gender_relations/

For several of my projects, gender is a key concept that I work with. Gender, not to be confused with sex (biological), is defined as the societal assignments of behavior for men and women based on their sex (male versus female). This includes how males and females dress, behave, consume, and identify.

Gender Relations is a blog that takes a critical look at pop culture through a gender perspective. Each day consumers are subjected to thousands of images and each of those images have been engendered. Gender Relations examines these messages in a semi-satirical, sarcastic way in order to raise awareness that, as a culture, we do not always discover on our own with emphasis on the concept that we do not need to be shackled down by these images.

Gender Relations is a manifestation of one string of research I have been involved in within the Sociology department since 2008 dealing with gender roles in society, specifically in media. The site is aimed at raising awareness about inequality and exposing how media uses gender, sex, and identity to sell limited images of people. A distinction is made between sex and gender, as the types of discrimination and inequality differ for these two topics, and a large percentage of Americans do not know the difference between the two concepts and use them interchangeably. This research began in April of 2008, and has continued to engage observations and thoughts about media, gender, and sex.

The blog is not only a work in content, but actual web design to cater to an audience of readers interested in such topics. Working on the allure of the website (such as AJAX search engines, better archiving, and being image and video heavy) is key to gaining viewership. Over the years that Gender Relations has been posting, there have been several references and requests to use articles in academic papers.

The aim of the project is broken up into four central focuses.

Media – A general reaction to media such as movies and music from categories ranging from horror movies flipping the gender roles in the film “Teeth” (http://www.wavinghand.com/gender_relations/?p=23) to Disney music (http://www.wavinghand.com/gender_relations/?p=42). I use these examples as cultural criticisms then try to offer up alternatives that show gender freedom such as “Free to Be You and Me” a 70s gender equality series by Marlo Thomas. Media reaction and discussion is the primary focus of the category.

News – The news section takes current news examines the stories from a gender perspective. At times, I will bring up news that relates to sexual health, orientation, etc. because although the point of the website is to talk specifically about gender, It would be blind to deny the correlations and conjunctions between these themes. Stories include analyzing genderblind college rooming policies (http://www.wavinghand.com/gender_relations/?p=22) to constant struggle of Marriage Equality (http://www.wavinghand.com/gender_relations/?p=64). I find that it is important to examine what is happening in our society and analyze it through this perspective, as gender is often taken for granted due to its seemingly natural characteristics.

Research – Even though all of the other categories are technically part of my research, this category talks specifically about sociological research that has been conducted, or other “official” work on gender. Looking at scholarly articles, papers, books, and studies, this offers credibility to all of the other research done on the website. Examining language (http://www.wavinghand.com/gender_relations/?p=48) or more academic-based sources.

Culture – This is the “other” category in some senses. Sometimes issues are so complex that attacking them from a multi-varied point of view seems appropriate. For example, One posting, about school shootings, offered research (taken from scholarly

article), media (taken from a narrative about two girls coping with a school shooting), and news events (like Columbine), were mingled in this post

http://www.wavinghand.com/gender_relations/?p=8 .

Gender Relations is project that I believe anyone can benefit from, if not just to think about something they may already know from a new perspective. We do not always look at the implications of film, music, or news at this angle. Although there are many related feminist blogs that talk about gender as a subject, I have yet to come across something that deals with culture and media in the same way.

5.3 *One Time Only*

Installation, Video

One Time Only was my first installation as an artist. The concept of my piece "One Time Only" explored the fleeting nature of media, and how we take for granted that it will be around forever. The content creates this statement through a series of sculptural, textual, and video elements.

In 2001, I watched a show on MTV titled "Spyder Games", which was a trashy, new-aged soap opera that was sending other programming "running for their broadcast money", but the show was short-lived and cancelled by MTV. MTV soon forgot about the show, leaving behind a small cult following. Since that time, I have scoured the internet for traces of the show to re-watch the series.

In early 2009, I found the one of the creator's e-mail addresses, and thought I would send a message to him. To my luck, I was e-mailed back, and with joyous news of one of the limited box sets that were made for the cast was going up an eBay. Instead of agonizing about a bidding war, I made an offer. I was the proud owner a week later.

The installation was comprised of a 10-minute trailer showing 5 times (ironic set against the

title of "One Time Only") throughout the night. "One Time Only" refers to the night, not the quantity of times the video was shown, as the people would not have future chance of seeing the content of the show. This video was projected onto a blank LCD screen to encapsulate the concept that the media is not as permanent as we think it is (escaping from the television). A binder accompanied the projection of this video detailing my exploits in trying to obtain these rare materials. In an encased vitrine, the 18-disk box set was displayed next to wall-label and artist statement.

Nothing says intermedia like gay sex, murder, lies, conspiracy, and crystal meth.

<http://www.wavinghand.com/OneTimeOnly/index.html>

5.4 *Childhood Memories*

Installation, Audio, Alcohol

"Childhood Memories" plays with the pre-conceived notions about the connotations of memories from childhood. Even the name "Childhood Memories" references a common phrase, "a better time, when the world seemed simpler", but that is not always the case. As we age, often times our memories of events are posited with distant emotional interpretation. For some, as the case may be, through repression or just moving forward in life, memories can fade away, but what happens when you revisit those memories?

An Audio piece at its core, taken from personal home movies about how the thought of "Childhood Memories" is not always a positive one, and that the perceptions we have of those times can be skewed due to the passage of time. When we look back on our own lives, at times, the way we perceive certain events are very different than the actuality of those experiences. Extracting the audio out of these home movies isolates a variable of the memory that when juxtaposed to something that contradicts those connotations, provides an interesting insight into what it means to experience your own memories that have been

forgotten. Using the symbolism of childhood artifacts as reference to innocence then grinding it against the tenuous elements of a different reality through the audio explores memory, innocence, growing up, and the perception of our own lives.

The installation consisted of a soft, white teddy bear with an iPod installed into its back. From the iPod, 3 sets of headphones were strung out for people to listen to the audio. The bear was set atop of a glass stand with Christmas gifts arranged all around the stand. Participants were invited to read the tags on the gifts while listening to the audio (also an abstract was posted on the wall behind the bear).

I knew I wanted to do something symbolic and tenuous about childhood memories when I obtained the home movies, and I feel as if the Christmas scene (the audio was cut from Christmas, which is why this theme was chosen) works well as a frequent milestone in the memories of our childhoods. Most of the audience can understand the concept and excitement normally associated with the winter holiday.

The installation was designed to make people recall their own childhood memories of holidays by seeing the bear and gifts, but once inside, the smell of alcohol doused on the bear, and the unhappiness of the audio makes people consider a different relationship to memory and emotional attachment. A tension between these two elements sets the participant to consider a variety of ways we recall the past.

5.5 *Mrs. Jingles*

This film project is a consideration of the independent film making industry. As a person who is very much into independent (rather than mainstream) film for my own interest, I sometimes wonder how certain films that seem to have subpar qualities are able to make distribution.

In 2002, I saw a film called S.I.C.K. (Serial Insane Clown Killer). This film has a low production value, some of the worst acting, as well as the plot being shrouded behind loads of sex scenes. Needless to say, the film was a miss by my personal as well as general film standards.

In 2007, I saw a film called Mr. Jingles. The concept was very similar to S.I.C.K, and once again lacked the characteristics of a quality film. I wondered how this film was distributed, and topped my long-standing “worst film ever seen” list. I found out later the film was a sequel to S.I.C.K. also named 2 S.I.C.K. (If I had know that I would never had wasted my time or money). It struck me odd that a major distribution company like Lionsgate would distribute a film that boded such value. The question of how a sequel could survive the industry had me confused; yet interested.

There are a variety of indie horror films that work well. Those that have good production value or at least good plot , characters, dialogue, etc. Then there are the films that have such terrible production value, that they surpass bad, and find themselves back to a humorous standpoint. This is normally plotted under “Comedy-Horror”. Such was not the case with either of these films.

In order to expose the haphazardness of the distribution corporations based on production value, I made the film a trilogy with: Mrs. Jingles. In this film you will find all the major flaws with indie filmmaking that should have been caught by editors, directors, cast, distribution company, or anyone working on the film. By making Mrs. Jingles seemingly have good production value with the DVD Case, DVD Menu, Intro, etc. Often times consumers are tricked with eye-catching artwork and seemingly good plot description, so by using these tactics, I can expose the flaws in the film by creating very polar themes. This film was built from the ground up. I did the costume design, set design, music, filming,

editing, etc. I tried to do this so over the top that it then became funny and thus more successful than the predecessors.

Outlined Flaws through discontinuity and flawed logic in plot & production. Some of these are more apparent than others.

** Tripod can be seen in windows.

** Mrs. Jingles wig can be found throughout the film in various places.

** Justine exclaims she did not kill Mrs. Jingle's husband (in a very serious and genuine tone), but her name was on the death note.

** Various objects are in different places throughout shots (coats, clothing, etc.).

** Final battle scene is in night vision and just before the chase scene; the two characters are wearing inside clothing – cut to them outside wearing winter clothing.

** Circus Tent – can see cupboards that they were tacked to.

** Can see me filming in the bathroom scene in the mirror.

** During the chair death scene, audio is out of sync.

These are all just a few examples of conscious critique on distribution. I did not want to just make a film that was a spoof of corny horror films, but the actual production and execution of a film, in general, and critique the almost trickery of the quality of work that is perceived and then executed to consumers. The distinguished appearance between a film meant to be satire and a film just going way beyond the cutting room is the point of Mrs. Jingles

5.6 *Family Portrait* < -- > *Self Portrait*

Photographs, 2 x 24" x 16"

Family Portrait - Self Portrait is a further exploration into the concepts of a nuclear

family as an entity. By objectifying family to a seemingly contrasted element such as metal, which is a cold and hard material, the portraits seduce a further inspection. Although both portraits contain various metal piercing jewelry, the portrait on the right wall [see media materials for reference] conjures a more solitary emotion, as it basks in the emptiness of the environment. The portrait on the left assumes a forward focal point, but with protruding support coming from the distance.

The title itself commits to an ambiguity between whether or not this is a self-portrait or a family portrait. The question seems almost pointless when looking at pieces of metal, but by depersonalizing the image, it allows for a further inspection into the two concepts as individuals and as a relationship. A paradoxical inquiry arises from the previous statement, as any portrait, even with multiple people tells the story of a person in relation to other people, thus creating a concept of self-portraiture. Regardless of our relationship to our family, whether it is supportive or seemingly desolate, the interplay between the two cannot be separated to a certain degree. Even though there are significant differences between what the viewer sees on the left, the space in between, and what the viewer sees on the right in regards to color, space, and surface artifacts, this is a single portrait. The space in between the photos serves as a timeline that can be expanded and contracted between the two for as little or as long as it takes a person to bridge the gap between self-portraiture, family portraiture and temporal elements between the two. In some ways, the edges of each are the beginning and end of a narrative.

The objectification of family and self through the use of metal piercings is a personal exploration between the concepts and relationships of family, self, and identity. As my body modifications are an integral part of who I am, I often feel the way that I am shaped by them as part of my identity feels and looks more omnipresent than the overall effect that a nuclear family structure has had over me. Exploring these concepts concurrently has

procured a sense that regardless of my relationship and feeling towards the concept of family and my identity (which is physically most apparent through the means of body modification), both have shaped me and seemingly becomes indistinguishable to what degree each has impacted my life.

5.7 Art, Life, and Business : Intermedia ?

Art, Life, and Business has been a series of engagements during the time period of 2008 – 2011 dealing with the concepts of where art begins and where daily life begins. This relationship is examined through a variety of concepts with daily life, gaming, cooking, radio, and a series of other engagements through traditional and non-traditional art-based mediums.

5.7.1 Zombie Holocaust

Zombie Holocaust is a hide and seek horror game that I created based on the concepts of remixing. Taking the classic game of hide and seek (and variations of the game “scatter”), and zombie horror films, I wanted to make a game would emulate what it would be like in case of a zombie apocalypse.

The game is simple. There is a group of people who are looking for an object that will kill the zombies (flashlight), but the area is shrouded with zombies (fast, slow, crawling) and dead bodies. Finding the flashlight to kill zombies can prove difficult because players never know when a dead body is actually a living zombie waiting to kill you. Each player has three lives before they themselves are fallen to the zombie virus.

Filming was done in Carnegie Hall on the University of Maine campus on Halloween night 2009. Perspectives from both zombies and survivors were shot. Currently, the film is unedited, and used as a research basis for horror-based games.

5.7.2 *Mozor*

<http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=31159191>

Mozor is an IRC network that I joined in January of 2008. A friend of mine whose server I frequented invited me to this network. There was no set structure to who was participating, but the general theme was technology. I do not have a large database of working knowledge on the technical aspects of databases, coding, or any of the “official topics” of the network, but I soon found out, that there was no official topic. Basically, the network is a free-for-all, and there are some interesting people on the network (from a 21 year old high-school drop out who tries picking up girls on webcam site, to an over droned married couple who could be considered more boring than stale rice). I befriend some people by becoming a daily, active member in the channel. About a month later, I was invited to talk on a podcast that they were going to be starting, and I thought this was a good opportunity to connect myself online in a new way, and experiment with a medium I had never really experimented with before. Before I knew it, I was a regular guest on Mozor Podcast.

I have appeared on all of the podcasts to date with the exception of two episodes. We submitted our podcast to iTunes in October of 2008, and happily was accepted and listed in the iTunes Store. The reason that this was such a surprising venture is that the podcast is, to put it lightly, explicit (and that is noted in the official directory). From categories ranging from: sex with stuffed animals, AIDS, gay marriage, blue poop, and debates about silverware, the conversation can go from serious to ridiculous in a matter of minutes.

I did not venture into this ‘project’ with the initial thoughts of art and life, but around the end of March / beginning of April, I started thinking about some of the concepts of art and life (and intermedia) in the context of podcasting, networking, friendships, and

media. Within two months I joined a network of mostly strangers spanning across the world from UK, USA, Canada, and Europe, and starting podcasting about ridiculous, serious, and controversial topics. What happens when you mix all of these things together, well, you might have to listen to a podcast or two.

Being involved in the podcast world, brought up questions of communication and distribution. Podcasts have long been thought of as the new talk radio. This allows for the release of a wide variety of materials. On one of our podcasts we featured a song that I wrote and produced called “Freezah Pop”, which is also on iTunes.

5.7.3 *Freezah Pop*

In March of 2009, I created a song entitled “Freezah Pop”. I made this song as an experiment due to my lack of audio-knowledge. The goal was to create a completely random song. I started singing about freezer pops. It took me about an hour total to produce the song. I wrote it on the fly, and then laid down the background music after I sang the song. Although this was just a one night, experimentation with a silly concept, it made me think that we should not take things we do in a creative way (no matter how short of an engagement they seem) for granted. Having no background in audio allowed me to explore the tools and work in a complete mode of mystery. The end product has obvious flaws, but for a first attempt, and as an ongoing practice to utilize new tools in my art practice, it has worked well. The goal is to eventually create an entire album with these types of songs, and some other song topics I have thought about: grandmother clocks, hangnails, dyadic withdrawal, and sippy cups.

I think the song was very successful, at least in the realm of “did people like it?”, that is the only quality of success measurement I can quantify. I have to say the moment I found the highest success was when I was over to a friend’s house and they started singing it (and

new all the words). To get a song inside of someone's head in this type of project makes me feel successful above all else.

5.7.4 *Dessert of Gaming*

How can food-making be intermedial? Wouldn't people want food and art to be combined more directly (they seem to serve well together when there is food at an exhibition, so why not?). I decided to document a baking session with a friend. This food would be creative in some way food though. I was thinking about my game design when I wrote a blog about how video games impact culture. Using this thought ('mixing' of intermedia – baking, gaming, and documentation), we made "Mario Mushroom Cupcakes". Unlike the "Mozor" section, I went into making this food with the specific questions of "is this art?". Raising this question at the beginning, I feel like different conclusions are drawn with some very interesting outcomes.

As I noted before, I came into this with the question of "can food be intermedial?". I can not answer that question across the board, but I can say, it did not feel intermedial. I truly don't think that food (at least the creation of it), can be intermedial. I would argue it could be artistic (or at the very least creative). Beyond these considerations, the end product still felt basically as something one eats, despite it's appearance.

The one fun and interesting part of this process was documenting. Taking the picture at the end felt like the most creative part to me. Seeing the little mushrooms from a game I played as a child on a plate did raise some interesting questions concerning nostalgia and food. The ability to turn one memory into a new form does lend itself to an intermedial framework, but would suggest this is used more as a mental process rather than an actual methodology. In the end, these, as a "piece" fail as art in my opinion, and reshape the boundaries of art and life.

Although, it seemingly is just baking some food that looks like gaming icons, the convergence of these two ideas felt like it could offer up something intermedial, but in the end truly is just cake decorating, which can be creative and skillful, but seemed outside the concerns of my personal art practice.

5.7.6 *Waving Hand, LLC*

Since 2005, I have been operating under the name of Waving Hand. My first iteration of my media portfolio needed a name, and I chose the friendly hand wave. Over the years, I have transformed this, largely as an art portfolio, as well as a place where I put freelance work. During the 2010-2011 time period, as I obtained more clients, this model shifted. In January of 2011, I wrote a proposal to be a social media consultant for Rape Response Services in Bangor, ME. In March 2011, I was chosen for the job, and figured it was time to make the work I do on the side an official business.

Part of creating this business was research into how to form a business. I think the information that I learned over the two-week period relating to forming a business, taxes, forms, and policies can benefit any artist working freelance or otherwise.

The position with RRS has served as a great experiment in the world of business and art. Having the role of a media consultant gives me the unique opportunity to work in an individual creative and progressive environment, which has been one of my goals for a very long time. As an artist, I find it essential to be using my skills of media and sociology to help other people, and this is a direct way I can use those processes. As of May 2011, I have been working on recreating their website and thinking of ways they can better serve their clients. I have drawn up strategies of using technology and communication in their organization to create effective outreach. I think the function of art works in a similar nature to raise awareness, provide insight, and get people to see many perspectives of a given situation,

which is similar to the work my business aims to do.

There is a difference between a large part of my art practice and Waving Hand as a business practice (that uses artistic skill), but the types of clients I hope to have are similar to those of RRS where I can use creativity and skill to enact change to the way someone functions in a progressive environment. For me, these are the most exciting ways to use my individual art practices, which are largely sociological in nature to begin, and in certain contexts, be business related.

5.7.7 *The Mattic*

<http://themattic.wavinghand.com>

The Mattic is an iPhoneography photo blog. As someone who has been using photography as a primary medium since 2005, when I got my iPhone in July of 2010, I was impressed by the quality of the camera and the ability of the camera apps that had been released. The Mattic is a photoblog specifically using the Hipstamatic app on the iPhone. This is the only common thread between any of the photos on the website. The photos range from social gatherings, random objects, to photos of my cats.

Hipstamatic allows users to use a variety of vintage lenses and films (Helga, Diana, Lucifer, etc.). This gives modern photographers such as myself the ability to frame the world with a tension between contemporary and vintage aesthetic. For example, using a Helga lens to photograph a 2010 Mustang creates a new category of photography; modern-vintage. Some argue that these are just cheap filters that give effects, no better than using Photoshop filters, but I argue that the developers of this application have put effort into making these photos feel genuine and they do not just layer the photos, but gives them a new personality. When taking photos, I still utilize the processes and thoughts that I would be mindful of when using my dSLR, but giving credibility to a new form of mobile

photography and legitimizing this form of photography.

Museums are legitimizing this platform through a variety of exhibits. One exhibit, which I partook in, was at the opening of the Dali Museum in Florida. Using online voting mechanism, the top 100 people were able to have their photos displayed on a projection during the opening. My photo (using the Dali film pack) placed #43. More and more art venues are accepting this form of photography, which is casual, mobile, and aesthetically different.

5.7.8 Letterboxing

Letterboxing is an analog form geocaching. Taking a concept that normally posited at a digital standpoint, and thinking about it without that context. This was interesting exploration for me, as someone who primarily uses technology in work and things about culture as highly digital. Geocaching is normally an activity done with GPS, which has gained widespread popularity over the last seven years whereas letterboxing is a manual, riddle-based treasure hunt.

Letterboxing is an intriguing pastime combining navigational skills and rubber stamp artistry in a charming "treasure hunt" style outdoor quest. A wide variety of adventures can be found to suit all ages and experience levels.

When a friend asked me to go letterboxing, and explained what it was to me, I thought about conversations I have had with other artists about "hobbies versus art", and decided I would try letterboxing as a response to this question. Using riddles, directions, and maps on the letterboxing website, it is up to people to locate the locally hidden artifacts. Now this also poses an interesting question. I was not directly making (or trying to make) any kind of artistic creation, but I was joining in a concept that I think it relatively intermedial, thus making me a collaborator in this medium.

I traveled in forests, graveyards, parks, and trails, all to find a little notepad and a sticker, then one finds the treasure in the woods, there is a stamp and a notepad for adventurers sign your name and collect the stamps from all of the letterbox locations. This ponders a sub-art question. Since you can doodle, create stamps, etc., it seems artistic (or at least creative). I tried to write or draw creative responses in these pads instead of simply signing my name. When one reaches these artifacts (Tupperware containers, usually), and leaves their story and identity, they become a contributor in a community, location-based archiving system.

With these types of activities people are using puzzle solving, physical activity, networking, and terrain as mediums and concepts in the process, so in some ways it could be argued that that these thought processes are similar to those utilized in intermedia. The scope of art does seem distant outside of universal archival, community project.

Journeying through UMaine trails, Mount Hope Cemetery, Brown Park, Cascade Park, and various other trails on search of treasures of memories people have had, connecting through personal experiences, must have some validity in the conversation. I find it to be overwhelmingly necessary for consideration as my work does deal with the connected experiences we have together, and even if the activity itself is not an art form, then some of the concepts are helpful in thinking about my personal practice when thinking about connected experiences. Some of my previous work with the Experispace project has similar notions of archiving experience over time in a specific place

In summer 2010, I started geocaching as well. Much of the same properties and thought processes exist as above only using a technological device. Documentation of these journeys can be found here : <http://www.wavinghand.com/geo>

5.8 *Culinary Incidents*

In the spring semester of 2010, a series of dinner events mixed with theatrical and performative elements were created in conjunction with concepts dealing with collaboration, community, local food, and performance. This exploration continued past the initial engagement with a small group of individuals known as the Core 5 Incident.

6.8.1 *An Evening with Professor Enki*

The first of the culinary incidents was an experiment in collaboration. For the first two months of the project, ten artists came together with a variety of ideas, but with a blank foundation. Through the process of research as well as sub-committees, we came up with three teams that would be responsible for those pieces of the experience; environment, culinary, and performance. Over the coming months, the teams crafted what became “An Evening With Professor Enki”.

The narrative told was of a nomadic scientific group experimenting throughout history on concepts of memory and time. The main character, Enki, was in search of his long lost love, Amaranthine. The performance told the story of Enki’s history with his love, and how his goal of finding her somewhere throughout time was nearing a resolution. As the night progressed, Enki delved further into psychosis, eventually going completely mad. His troupe leaves him behind after his final unraveling, leaving the audience to question whether he found Amaranthine or he simply was crazy.

Taking place in the Lord Hall Gallery at The University of Maine, a dinner-lab was constructed with a rich audio and visual presentation, backdropped by two strange waitress-performers, and a variety of foods including gelatinous beat spheres and locally made breads. Gas masks, elegant table settings, and strange observing characters in full-science dress invaded the space. A maestro with a red Mohawk dressed in formalwear, as well as his partner lurked in the back of the room, controlling the audio and visual

experience. The audience was in the midst of this performance as axes were placed next to their heads and strange food was served.

MENU FOR AN EVENING WITH PROFESSOR ENKI

- Scavengers Spread
- Beef Goulash
- Leaf and Root Sweet Potato Spinach Soup
- Poor Man's Bread Pudding
- Spiced Cider & Maple Tea

My part in this performance was as “Maestro” who was the video controller. Videos concerning the backdrop of the company in the form of PSA’s were shown, as well as a variety of scientific, agricultural, and historical videos to enrich the presentation and propel some of the minor themes of the show including quality of life, safety, and government sanctioned nuclear testing. One example of this enrichment is a conversation Enki has with Robert Oppenheimer. The Evening Ends with a barrage of flickering memories and explosion.

5.8.2 *The Gorsedd*

The Core 5 Incident, a company of collaborative artists, actors, craftsmen, chefs, and musicians from An Evening with Professor Enki, presents an omni-modal and integrated performance project in The Gorsedd. The production, which unfolds in a futuristic post-post-apocalyptic tavern, draws from Welsh history to computer science to cultivate conversation and generate an immersive and interactive community dining event.

The Gorsedd is a story that deals with notions of memory and relationships. The script describes a post-apocalyptic tavern run by a group of people known as “Archivists”. Concepts surrounding trust and power circulate the audience when they are put in the

hands of their archivist. These story-keepers are the only people who have retained their long-term memory after the Singularity Virus swept through the lands many years prior. The Archivists maintain a library of community memories for the townsfolk who, although have varying amounts of their short-term memory, can remember no more than a month's worth of experiences. The performance invites participants to engage in their new identities, speak, and watch as the chef and archivist fight over their fates as they eat dinner. The Core 5 Incident; Richard Corey, Bethany Engstrom, John Bell, Justin Taylor, and myself returned with some of the concepts of previous work of performative and culinary work. The goal of *The Gorsedd* was to give viewers a stake in the performance; essentially, they were all participants on some level. Throughout the show, the audience had opportunity to participate on whatever level they chose, but actors were planted in the audience to push forth the narrative and debate about whether or not keeping memories in journals was worthwhile for the community and whether or not people should have access to their singular journals.

A portable kitchen was constructed as well as tables for the audience. A dining experience consisting of stew, cider, breads, vegetables, and bread pudding filled the air alongside the spices that were being used within the performance.

MENU FOR THE GORSEDD

- Scavengers Spread
- Beef Goulash
- Leaf and Root Sweet Potato Spinach Soup
- Poor Man's Bread Pudding
- Spiced Cider & Maple Tea

The chef, who was part of the performance, and the kitchen are a pseudo-stage for

the night, so the lines between performance, kitchen, and audience were often blurred in an intentional and dynamic way. Throughout the night, audience is invited to be performer by retrieving their own food, speaking on their life, asking questions, and create their own stories.

The Gorsedd took place at the University of Maine's Pavilion Theater for 3 nights between in December 2010. After the success of the University shows, Core 5 was invited to the Corey Daniel's Gallery in Wells, Maine to do a show on April 23rd, 2011.

5.9 *Sanctuary*

Sanctuary was collaboration between Ryan Guerrero, Bill Giordano, and myself. The concept of this research-based installation was saturation of media. The idea behind the project was to create a safe space within a chaotic world of advertisements, movies, television, and other forms of visual and audio media, meanwhile asking participants to rethink their own level of media consumption.

The images themselves present a wide variety of messages. As Marshall McLuhan noted, "the media is the message", and we wanted to inspect what those messages were from the perspective of progressive and conservative media. We each found media that we found to present ideals of beauty, gender, politics, family structure, and other sociological areas of study in either freeing or limiting ways. The videos were presented as two quadratic setups changing each quadrant of video at random intervals. Videos ranging from Paris Hilton to I Love Lucy to CNN were shown. The audio was not separated, so the installation created a type of sensory overload chamber for people (a metaphor for how our culture sometimes operates) giving a total of 8 audio outputs on a 4-channel stereo setup. The installation was concealed in an audio/video room at an old Circuit City building. Within this chamber, a second handcrafted room was draped using black curtains in the

center between the video feeds. Participants were invited inside of this room for one. Inside this room, a broken television stood front and center. A single pair of headphones hung nearby presenting a collaborative-made audio from each of our practices and interests. Audio was created to pose media that each of us creates out of expression rather than with intention of mass distribution. Our practices were blended together to create a truly collaborative audio piece. The area trapped out all light, minus one single LED light that lit the headphones, giving an almost ethereal presentation of the headphones. This space was a sanctuary from the overload of messages and media presented in the outside room. The thought that our culture uses entertainment to escape (create sanctuary) reality at times was a prominent concept in the installation, but juxtaposed next to the message that, at times, we need to get back what is important to us as individuals (the sub-chamber). Sanctuary was presented in a shut down Circuit City building in December of 2009 during the exhibition, "Class Action".

5.10 *NMDNet*

NMDnet is an experiment in creating a "meta-network" of social networks to help unite in a single conversation between the New Media Department's students, faculty, and alumni. The NMD community is increasingly dispersed across different networks, with undergraduates on Facebook, alumni on Twitter, and everyone in between getting their news via blogs, email, and the web. NMDnet exploits cross-network protocols to allow users to check news in any of these platforms and for their comments to re-appear on a centralized blog even if they come from Twitter or Facebook. NMDnet is a project of the University of Maine's Still Water lab.

NMDnet was done in collaboration with several new media majors participating in Jon Ippolito's viral media seminar. NMDnet was created to connect existing alumni back

into the University of Maine's New Media Program. While NMD Majors are attending the program, they receive updates on opportunities for proposals, projects, and workshops that they lose when they leave. NMDnet alleviates some of that disconnect and bridges the university model where alumni are exterior to "what's happening". Contribution and reception are decentralized with many ways to connect into the network through RSS, Twitter, e-mail, Facebook, and other types of aggregators that users can take advantage of.

NMDnet was presented at the Contagious Media Expo at the Foster Center of Innovation at the University of Maine in December of 2009.

5.11 *Divorce Photography*

<http://www.divorcephotography.com>

When people fall in love, they celebrate it in a very special ceremony adored by many cultures in many different ways, but often emulating the concept of a wedding. They invite their friends, family, loved ones, and the photographer. The photographer is there to capture the memories for the bride and groom (or groom and groom, or bride and bride) for all time, but what happens when that all goes sour?

Divorce Photography was a project that aimed at exploring this question. With the divorce rate well over 50%, we often keep these memories and stories private. DP does not glorify divorce, but rather see these moments as important (sometimes therapeutic) stories with almost equal validity. Although talking about divorce is not as taboo as it has in the past (with people throwing divorce parties emulating those of a wedding shower), those memories are not spoken about to the same degree. Even funerals, which are a sad event as well, have a place in memory and conversation that divorce does not, therefore the intention of Divorce Photography was to talk about the reasons why relationships go downhill and give people a chance to tell their stories of divorce.

As a wedding photographer, it seemed interesting to utilize the ritual of framing the memories of break-up in similar ways to those of the unions. Three photo shoots with three different stories were presented, but with both sides of the story. Often times with relationships, friends and family hear a story from one perspective, and although sometimes it is one person's fault, often times there are three sides of the story (third being the actual events). Stories ranging from an overly domesticated man to a closed-off World of Warcraft addict set the stage for the project.

Divorce Photography was presented as a multi-media installation at the Foster Center of Innovation at the University of Maine in December 2009. The photo shoots were displayed on a monitor wall of 12 screens. A divorce cake was available for snack and a divorce guestbook was presented for people to sign as well.

5.12 *Gender, Inc.*

<http://www.gender-inc.com>

Gender, Inc. (2009), is a company that markets gender. A pastiche of imagined corporate life and the possible accouterments that would be used for such a company fuel it's existence. The viewer is asked to consider the possible existence of Gender, Inc. and the hypothetical motivations and methods the company would use to re-enforce gender to its clients' clients, i.e. members of society. Gender, Inc presupposes that gender is bought and sold within our society on a daily basis through advertisements, products, and services, which can be seen through a variety of sociological research. Gender, Inc. helps to sell this integral feature of the human being through biological, sociological, and entrepreneurial consultation. Gender, Inc. works with both corporations and individuals.

Gender, Inc was conceived in two parts; an installation as well as website. The installation brings a piece of Gender Inc. into the real world. Objects found around "the

office" create a tension within the ideologies behind the company. A personal office space filled with the irony. By using cultural signifiers of masculinity and femininity, the installation questions the intention of the marketing world that is selling simplified homogenous views of identity.

Gender, Inc.'s website hones the belief that regardless of our personal beliefs, society dictates two gender patterns, and we help those who want to be part of that acceptance. The company website does this by providing detailed accounts of clients both corporate and personal, articles relating to gender, as well as media including an infomercial and brochure. The audience can keep up to date with the company through the web or their Twitter and watch as their client list grows.

All materials within the web and installation question the traditional gender binary to expose that we are more complex than a simple cultural assignment.

Gender, Inc was a long distance collaboration with San Francisco artist Donald Daedalus. This project would have been vastly different without email, moreover, the Internet. The inception of the collaboration, as well as pivotal moments, was born from the emails. We approached this collaboration as the point when our separate practices intersected. That point was the shared interest in human perception of reality, particularly in gender. Our approach to the topic was to create an imaginary company that would market gender. At this point email played a crucial role in our disparate interpretations of the phrase "market gender." Matt imagined a company that would service other corporations' campaigns to sell a product and the necessary genderfication of those products. Donald imagined a company that would consult individuals one-on-one regarding their identity in biological, sociological, and spiritual terms. We compromised by creating two divisions of the same company, for which we named "Gender, Inc."

5.13 *Minute by Minute Reviewer*

<http://www.wavinghand.com/1minuteReviewer/>

As a culture, we use ratings systems to tell us how well a product or service operates, tastes, smells, feels, satisfies, you name it, but what do these often-numerical representations really mean? In academia, science, medicine, marketing, and other professional fields, ratings are often cohesive criteria and have operationalized meanings for their ratings, but not everything that is rated has such distinct ability to be drawn meaning from these ratings. The case in point for this research is the area of film. Diverse ranges of reviewing film exist. We have film critics, we have web interfaces, we have user reviews, as well as a myriad of other possibilities both online and through print. These scales typically range from 0 – 5 or 0 – 10, but how does giving a film a 2.0 versus a 5.0 really say anything about the film? This project explores the research methods I have deployed in relation to quantitative measures of rating film in a way that is atypical of current processes. The question “What is the best way to rate a film?” was closely analyzed and alternatives were given. In a world with so many methods ranging from the numerical to the alphabetical, but what qualifications are deserving of the ratings that are given? Minute By Minute Reviewer investigates rating systems, subjectivity, and employs new methods of objective and transparent rating systems. Research was produced using current and differing rating systems such as IMDB, Rotten Tomatoes, MetaCritic, and a variety of online newspaper reviewers were taken into consideration as accepted metrics of critique. Using charting software to visualize my own versions of evaluation, I rated films using different methods and to varying degrees ranging from every single minute to every five minutes, no comments to comments every five minutes.

The project analyzes how we take ratings for granted. If something has a high review, it does not mean that we will like it, so when employing my ratings, I gave specific reviews to why I enjoyed or disliked a specific section of the film. For example, if at minute

25 I gave audio a 2.5, I would give specific reason (at that point in the film) as to why I gave it that rating. This method of rating also allows evaluating consistency of a film. At times, when charting, there are large dips in a film, which would signify why an overall rating may not be as high as one would think (when simply reading a textual review). My scale was based on a standard 10-point scaled. I find that 5 stars do not allow a wide enough visual range for readers to evaluate a film. Within the approximately 40 ratings in categories from acting, sound, cinematography, plot, and believability, the review would be at least transparent. With all things in similar nature, people will take what they want from the content, but I struggle with the snapshot review using scalar methodology in its current draft. This method does allow for a higher level of transparency which will expose bias within a review. Although Minute By Minute Reviewer may not be the most practical way to review a film, it opens up a conversation about the trust mechanisms relating to these systems.

5.14 Exhibitions 2008 - 2011

2011 "Best in Show," Salvador Dali Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida

2011 "The Gorsedd," Pavillion Theater, University of Maine, Orono, Maine

2010 "An Evening with Professor Enki," Lord Hall Gallery, University of
Maine Orono, Maine

2009 "Contagious Media Expo," Student Innovation Center, University of
Maine, Orono, Maine

2009 "Without Borders IV," Lord Hall Gallery, University of Maine, Orono,
Maine

2009 "Class Action," Circuit City Building, Bangor, Maine

2009 "Intermedia Open House," Lord Hall, Orono, Maine

2009 "Graduate Student Research Expo," University of Maine, Orono, Maine

2008 "Student Works," Lord Hall Gallery, University of Maine, Orono, Maine

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APPENDIX A : *PLAYGROUND ISOLATOR* TRANSCRIBED

The following are examples of each chapter of *AXIS*, the book and what font was used for each chapter.

LEFT
IT'S MARK
AND I'M ROTTING
DOWN IN THE
BASE MENTALLY UNSTABLE

Figure A.1 : *SICKO* – Font : *Make Juice*

I
WANNA
BE FREE I WANNA
LIVE
LIFE
WANNA
FEEL
SANE
in the world outside

Figure A.2 : Playground Isolator – Font : Wilderness

*IT TOOK
FOREVER_{TO}
TURN
AWAY
AND
TRY
TO
BEGIN*

Figure A.3 : Skin – Font : Orator Std

The
Translator
for the great dictator

Figure A.4 : Funeral Mute – Font: Lutin Filbuste

prop
a blanket up
with a broomstick in it
and
hide
inside
cross-legged
on the floor

Figure A.5 : Get Outa My Head – Font : Stewart Sans

ASPHYXIATION
makes me breathe

Figure A.6 : Collapse – Font : postnuclear

would
you
take back
all your enemies
now
you're
faced with **your**
memories

Figure A.7 : Dream Baby Dream – Font : Plantagent Cherokee (& modifications)

IT'S OUT OF THE
QUESTION
TO HAVE YOU
KNEELING
AT MY
FEET

Figure A.8 : Thanks to Me – Font : Nova Solid

**DONT NEED
PERMISSION**

IF I WANT TO TAKE IT BACK

Figure A.9 : Shame on Me – Font : Board Contest

**YOU TOOK A
SMACK
THE IMPACT WAS INSTANT**

Figure A.10 : Ride of your Life – Font : Dirtybag Bold

THOSE
OBJECTS
IN YOUR SIDE
OF YOUR SPOON
ARE MUCH
NICER
THAN YOU

Figure A.11 : The Last Machine – Font : Aristotle Punk



Figure A.12 : Call the Game – Truskey

APPENDIX B : DIAGNOSING LYRICS AS TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

The photos are outlined from Section 3.2 to Section 3.12. All photos taken with an iPhone 4 using the Hipstamatic app by Synthetic.



Figure B.1 : Photo for Etiology of Major Depressive Disorder, "296.33"



Figure B.2 : Photo for Symptom of Major Depressive Disorder, "296.33"

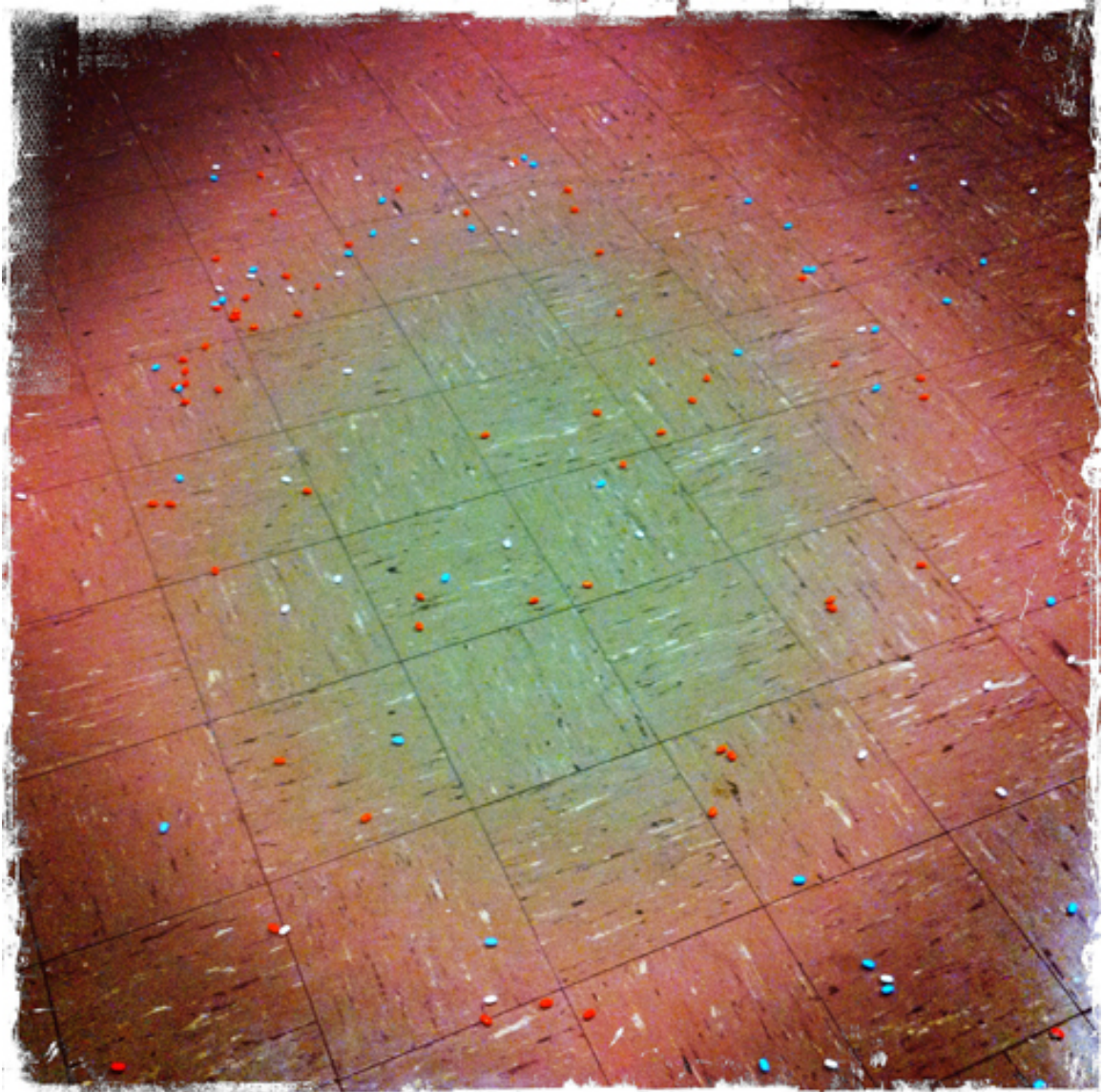


Figure B.3 : Photo for Treatment of Major Depressive Disorder, "296.33"



Figure B.4 : Photo for Etiology of Phobia, "300.21"



Figure B.5 : Photo for Symptom of Phobia, "300.21"



Figure B.6 : Photo for Treatment of Phobia, "300.21"



Figure B.7 : Photo for Etiology of Body Dysmorphic Disorder, "300.7"



Figure B.8 : Photo for Symptom of Body Dysmorphic Disorder, "300.7"



AUG 80

Figure B.9 : Photo for Treatment of Body Dysmorphic Disorder, "300.7"



Figure B.10 : Photo for Etiology of Dissociative Identity Disorder, "300.14"



Figure B.11 : Photo for Symptom of Dissociative Identity Disorder, "300.14"



Figure B.12 : Photo for Treatment of Dissociative Identity Disorder, "300.14"



Figure B.13 : Photo for Etiology of Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder, "302.71"



Figure B.14 : Photo for Symptom of Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder, "302.71"



Figure B.15 : Photo for Treatment of Hypoactive Sexual D. Disorder, "302.71"



Figure B.16 : Photo for Etiology of Borderline Personality Disorder, "301.83"



Figure B.17 : Photo for Symptom of Borderline Personality Disorder, "301.83"



Figure B.18 : Photo for Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder, "301.83"



Figure B.19 : Photo for Etiology of Depersonalization Disorder, "300.6"



Figure B.20 : Photo for Symptom of Depersonalization Disorder, "300.6"



Figure B.21 : Photo for Treatment of Depersonalization Disorder, "300.6"

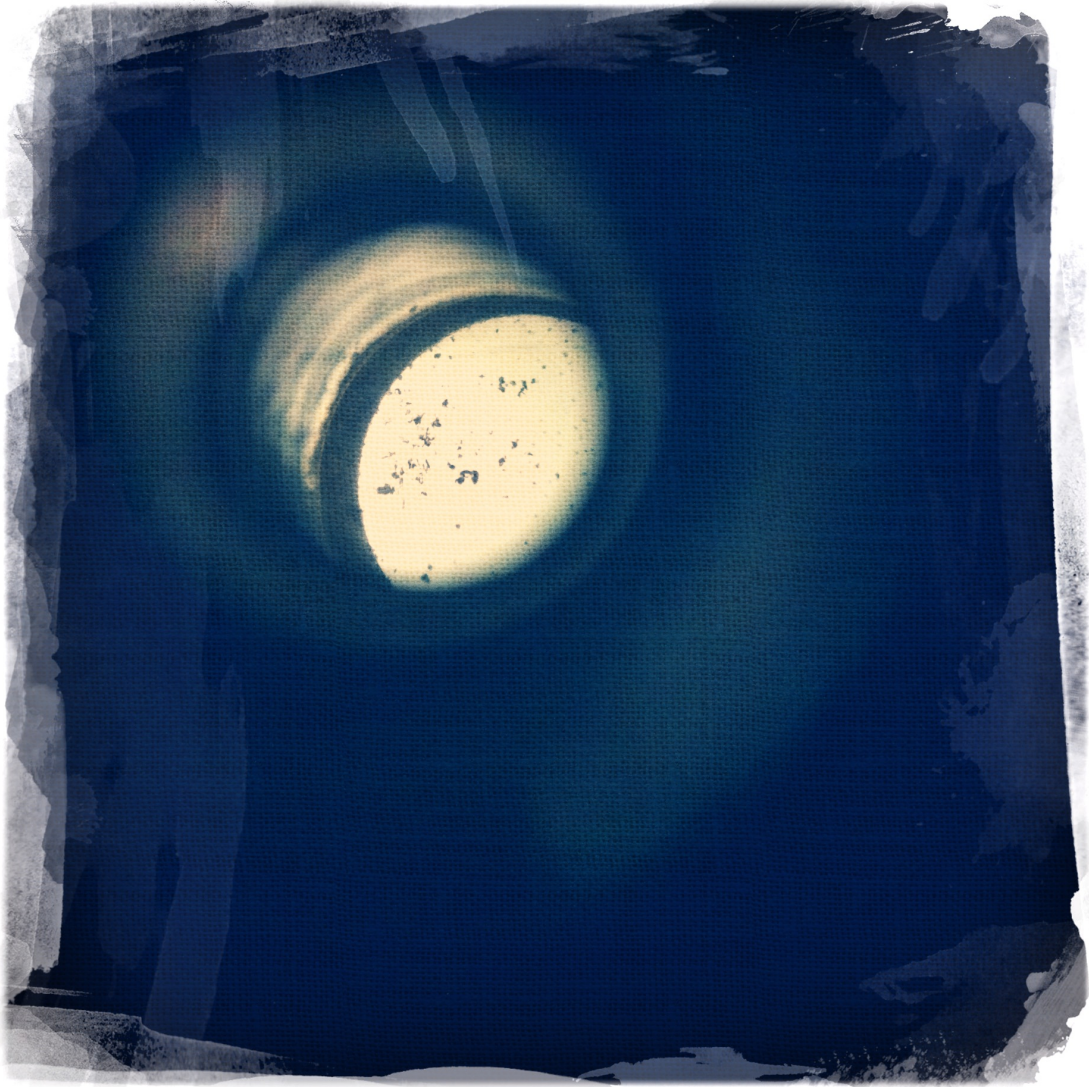


Figure B.22 : Photo for Etiology of Acute Stress Disorder, "308.3"



Figure B.23 : Photo for Symptom of Acute Stress Disorder, "308.3"



Figure B.24 : Photo for Treatment Acute Stress Disorder, "308.3"



Figure B.25 : Photo for Etiology of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, "309.81"



Figure B.26 : Photo for Symptom of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, "309.81"



Figure B.27 : Photo for Treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, "309.81"



Figure B.28 : Photo for Etiology of Bipolar Disorder, "296.63"



Figure B.29 : Photo for Symptom of Bipolar Disorder, "296.63"



Figure B.30 : Photo for Treatment of Bipolar Disorder, "296.63"



JUN 81

Figure B.31 : Photo for Etiology of Schizophrenia, "295.30"



Figure B.32 : Photo for Symptom of Schizophrenia, "295.30"



Figure B.33 : Photo for Treatment of Schizophrenia, "295.30"



Figure B.34 : Photo for Etiology of Schizotypal Disorder, "301.22"



Figure B.35 : Photo for Symptom of Schizotypal Disorder, "301.22"

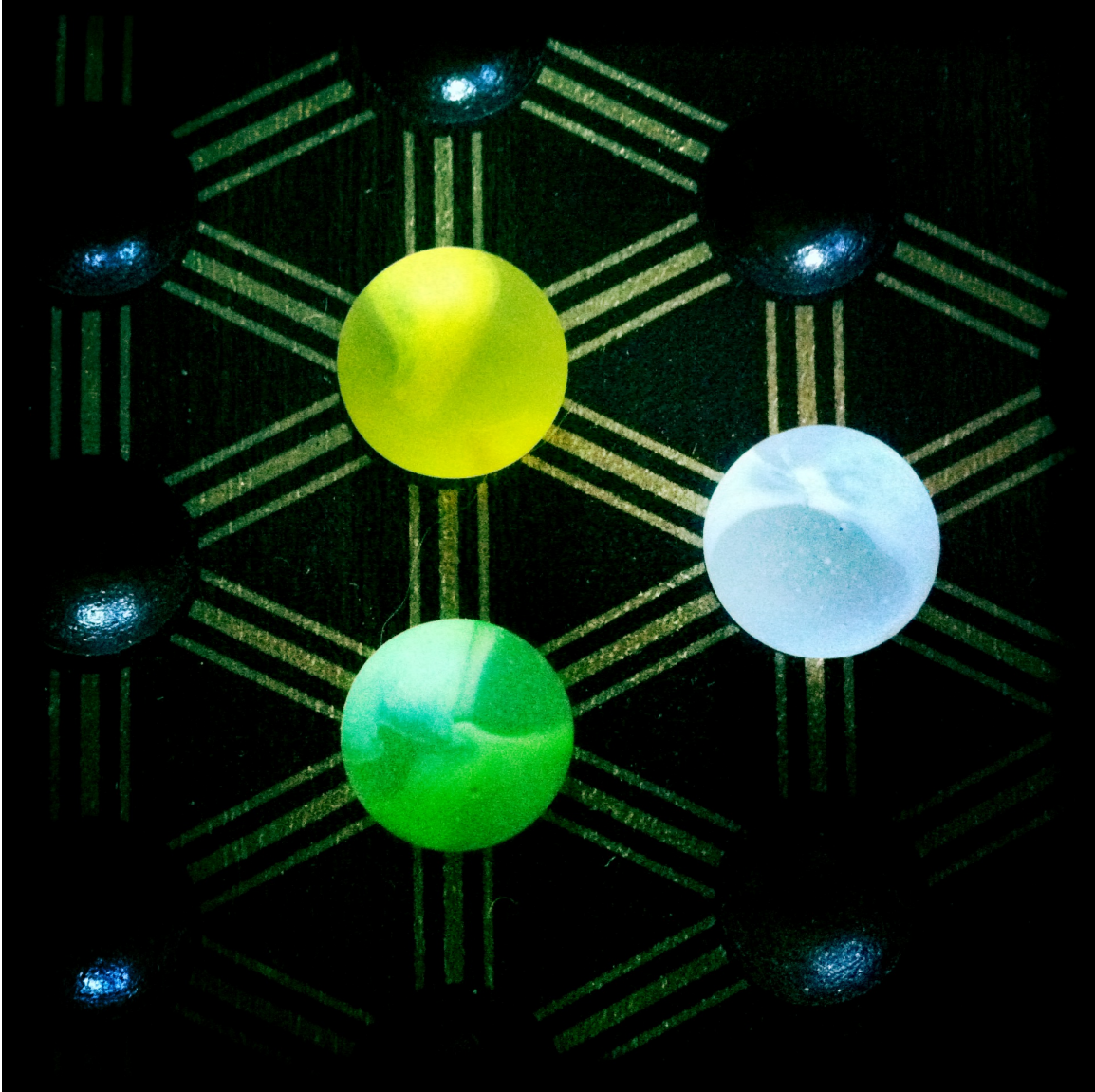


Figure B.36 : Photo for Treatment of Schizotypal Disorder, "301.22"

APPENDIX C : WORKS 2008 – 2011 IMAGES



Figure C.1 : Photos from *One Time Only*



Figure C.2 : Photo from *Childhood Memories*



Figure C.3 : Cover Art for *Mrs. Jingles*



Figure C.4 : Photos from *Family Portrait – Self Portrait*



Figure C.5 : Photo from *Dessert of Gaming*



Figure C.6 : Photo from *Letterboxing*



Figure C.7 : Photo from *An Evening with Professor Enki*



Figure C.8 : Photo from *The Gorsedd*



Figure C.9 : Photo from *Divorce Photography*



Figure C.11 : Photo from *Gender, Inc.*

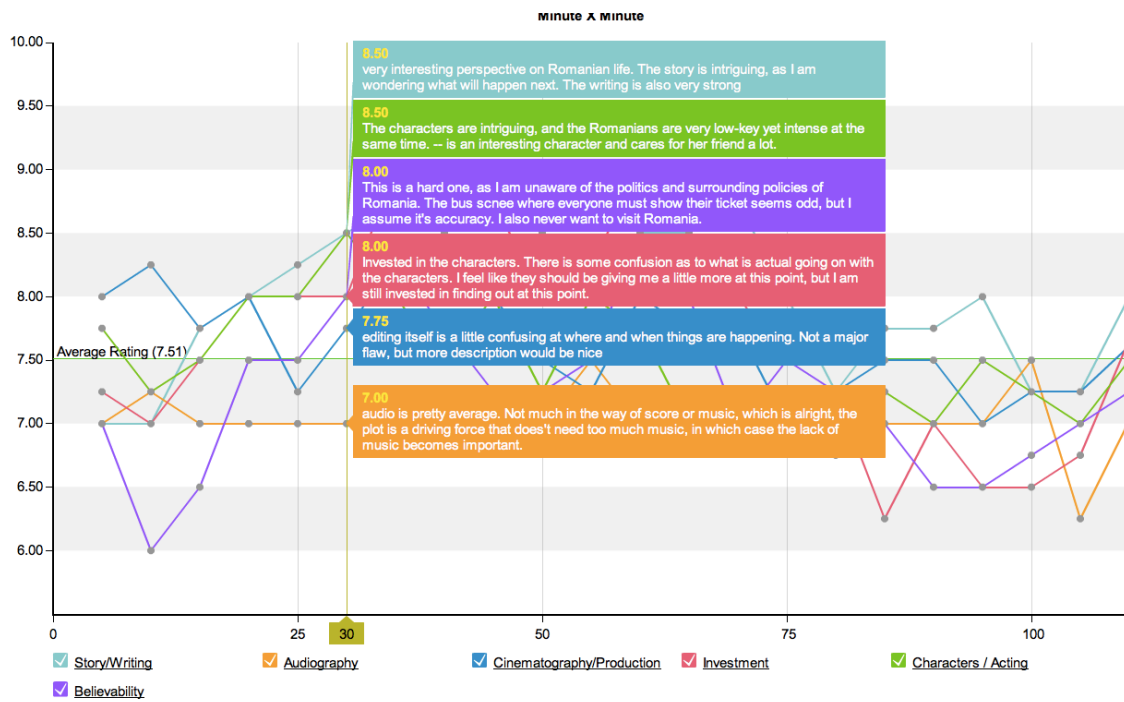


Figure C.12 : Screenshot from *Minute By Minute Reviewer*

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Matthew Leavitt was born in Millinocket, Maine on July 19th, 1985. He graduated from Stearns High School in 2004 and went on to obtain his New Media degree at the University of Maine. He graduated in 2008 with his Bachelor's Degree and went directly to the University of Maine's newly established Intermedia MFA program. Mixing the creativity of art and media with his concentration in Sociology, Matt aims at education. He will be going on to attend Higher Education at the University of Maine to obtain his M.Ed to carry on his interests with the Upward Bound program, which he has been part of since 2001. Matt is a candidate for the Master of Fine Arts in Intermedia from the University of Maine in August, 2011.