

MIAMI UNIVERSITY
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We hereby approve the Dissertation

of

Hideaki Imai

Candidate for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Larry M. Leitner, Ph.D., Chair

Vaishali Raval, Ph.D., Reader

Deborah Wiese, Ph.D., Reader

Ann Fuehrer, Ph.D., Graduate School Representative

ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF FILM-MAKING IN NATURE-HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

by

Hideaki Imai

I conceived this study based on the premise that we need to improve our relationship with the natural world. Based on my literature review, I argued that art-making could be helpful in improving our nature-human relationships. I then explored the experiences of four participants who made short films about their relationships with nature. I interviewed these participants before and after their film-making experience, asking how their nature-human relationships changed due to the film-making experience. I analyzed my participants' experiences using the framework of Experiential Personal Constructivist Psychology (Leitner, 1985). Participants stated that, due to the film-making experience, they could deepen the relationships with nature by becoming more aware and appreciative of the nature in their lives. Participants' experiences were also consistent with Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan, 1995), as they became more aware of themselves and nature due to their film-making in nature. I discuss several implications for Experiential Personal Construct Psychology, Attention Restoration Theory, and future research.

THE ROLE OF FILM-MAKING IN NATURE-HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

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Hideaki Imai

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Dissertation Chair: Larry M. Leitner

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The Role of Film-making in Nature-human Relationships

Human beings and the natural world are intricately connected. As we are in relationship with nature, we humans need to treat nature well. However, human beings threaten the health of nature by causing environmental degradation. Furthermore, human beings depend on nature's benefits, and will suffer the consequences of environmental degradation if we do not improve our treatment of nature.

If we seek to improve our treatment of nature, we need to recognize our bond with non-human beings. In this study, I provide a relational conceptualization of deepening our relationship with nature. In doing so, I used previous literature to identify the key role of aesthetics in our relationship with the natural world. Many researchers, theorists, and artists discussed how aesthetics, our sense of beauty and ugliness, have the potential to provoke our hearts to be passionate about our relationship with the natural world. Based on the literature and my own experience, I found that one can practice one's sense of aesthetic in ecological art-making. I believe film-making to be an apt form of ecological art-making, given that film-making helps us integrate our various senses in our exploration of the natural world. I conducted a study where I asked participants to make a short film about their relationship with nature and provided a relational conceptualization of their film-making. Although many scholars have investigated ways to improve our relationship with the natural world, no scholar has looked at film-making about nature through a relational lens.

Before describing this study in detail, I will review the literature on how human life and happiness depend on the benefits that nature offers to support the premise that we are indebted to the natural world. I also will raise the problem that, even though nature offers us benefits, our current treatment of nature is troublesome, as we have contributed to environmental degradation. Giving examples of environmental degradations, I will show the predicament of the planet and its effects on human beings. I then will introduce some research with possible explanation about why humans have not treated nature better. Afterwards, I will argue for the need to improve our treatment of nature.

After I establish that there is a relationship between human beings and the natural world, I will present the theoretical rationale for paying further attention to the nature-human relationship. Specifically, I will discuss Leitner's (1985) Experiential Personal

Constructivist Psychology (EPCP) as a theoretical foundation to understand our connection with the natural world. As EPCP primarily concerns interpersonal relationships, I will explore the challenges of applying EPCP to our relationship with nature. I then will discuss a premise in EPCP that the universe is interconnected, including external events and internal processes. I will argue that, in the interconnected universe, the beauty in the external world connects with our internal sense of aesthetics. Based on my discussion of aesthetics, I will suggest that art-making about nature could help people realize nature's beauty and value. Specifically, I will introduce a study in which the participants used film as the medium to enhance our relationship with nature.

Finally, I will offer a personal example of ecological art-making in the form of a film about my relationship with nature. I discuss my own creative process to provide an example of film-making that can be used in a psychological study. In doing so, I will provide a detailed summary of the video, a thorough account of the process in which I created the video, and how it helped me reconstruct my relationship with nature.

Before I move into my theoretical rationale and literature review, I often use the terms "nature" "natural world" to refer to the sum of beings and things that are not human, such as the flora, fauna, and the land itself. Furthermore, I will not be using "his or her" whenever I describe a generic person to avoid the gender binary. Instead, I will be using gender-neutral terms, such as "one's" or "a person" to refer to persons with unknown gender.

The Nature-human Relationship

Oxygen is a basic human necessity; it is also a result of photosynthesis by plants. During the process, the trees capture sunlight, turning it into sugar. Adding carbon dioxide, the plants make oxygen that enables animal life to survive on earth (Suzuki, 2012). Furthermore, our interaction with natural light is responsible for our circadian rhythm (Mantler & Logan, 2015). Human life depends on the health of the planet. Humans also have power over the state of nature, as we can protect the environment through conservation efforts or destroy non-human communities through industrialization and urbanization (Jensen, 2011). As such, the nature-human relationship is symbiotic. We need to care for our relationships with the non-human lives on this planet, because

nature-human relationships keep both sides alive and healthy. If we can continue to help non-humans exist, we can continue to enjoy the necessities we need to survive.

In the context of psychology, Wilson (1984) discussed a psychological dimension of the nature-human relationship in the form of the “biophilia” hypothesis: human beings have an “innate emotional affiliation to other living organisms” (p. 56). Supporting Wilson’s hypothesis, 55% of households in the United States have animals (Beck & Meyers, 1996), many of whom we consider as close family members, especially when we include them in core family activities, such as sleeping in the same bed or confiding secrets (Beck & Katcher, 2003). Thompson and Gullone (2003) found that a child’s direct contact with animals predicts nourishing empathy and prosocial behavior as an adult.

In addition to non-human animals, we also have an emotional affiliation with the environment. We experience psychological benefits if we immerse ourselves in the wilderness. For example, Capaldi, Dopko, and Zelenski (2014) conducted a meta-analysis in which they found that people experience less depression and anxiety when they report high subjective connection with nature. Dutch scholars also conducted a study where they found that Dutch residents who lived far away from green areas were 25% more at risk for feeling depressed and anxious than those who lived in predominantly green areas (Maas, Verheij, de vries, Spreeunberg, Schellevis, & Groenewegen, 2009). Greenway (1995) conducted a study in which he examined 1,400 participants who went through a two-week long wilderness course. Based on interviews and questionnaires, he found that the participants experienced an enhanced sense of aliveness, well-being, and energy. Finally, Kuo and Sullivan (2001) found that living in a nature-abundant environment is associated with prosocial behavior for residents in urban public housing developments. Those who live in areas with trees showed better communication skills, stronger bonds with their neighbors, and a higher solidarity with their overall community in comparison to residents who preferred treeless areas. From their results, Kuo and Sullivan concluded that our bonds with the nature extend to our human-to-human interactions.

Despite the physical and psychological benefits offered by the natural world, human influence often leads to environmental degradation (Stokols, Misra, Runnerstrom, & Hipp, 2009). For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC,

2014) associated climate change with an increase in intense hurricanes, droughts, and the rise of sea levels. IPCC surmised that human activity likely caused more than half of the rise in global average surface temperature from 1951 and 2010. We now have the warmest climate ever recorded (National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 2016). Jensen (2011) stated that our economic system is one factor in climate change; we seek to expand our “growth-based” economy by excessively consuming and expending natural resources. As we consume energy, we burn excessive fossil fuels, releasing CO₂ in the atmosphere, changing the global climate. However, we allow, through economic incentives like our tax policy, corporations that facilitate such consumption to ignore the extent of their pollution, and contribute to climate change without accountability (Leonard, 2010). Without mending our ways, we could further contribute to climate change with hazardous consequences.

As another example, dryland salinity degrades the environment. The term refers to the high accumulation of salts in the land and water. Through urbanization and agriculture, humans have contributed to higher salt levels in the soil and water (Speldewinde, Cook, Davies & Weinstein, 2009). As the saline level makes it difficult for plants to absorb water, native vegetation and biodiversity deteriorate (New South Wales Department of Water and Energy, 2009). The National Land and Water Resources Audit found dryland salinity in 1 million hectares of the southwest agricultural zone of Australia and predicted it will increase to 5.4 million by 2050 (NLWRA, 2001). Speldewinde, Cook, Davies and Weinstein (2009) investigated the mental health impact of dryland salinity by examining multiple health databases of a particularly affected region. They found that residents in areas with high dryland salinity were more likely to experience psychiatric hospitalizations. The authors provided one theory to explain their results: given the salinity, the land became unsuitable for farming, compromising the livelihood, land values, and productivity of the residents and farmers, thereby affecting the mental health of the community.

Researchers have found other evidence of human influence in environmental degradation in the phenomena of droughts. Similar to dryland salinity and climate change, droughts are slow but devastating in the long-term (Vins, Bell, Saha & Hess, 2015). Droughts destroy biodiversity and have hazardous effects for plants, animals, and human

beings, with effects such as increased risk for asthma, poor hygiene, loss of agricultural productivity and endangered food security. Vins et al. (2015) also reviewed 82 journal articles about the mental health effects of drought exposure. They found that participants in these studies often experienced depression and anxiety due to drought exposure. From the aggregate findings, they identified a common pattern in droughts' effects on mental health: droughts often necessitated participants to migrate from their home environment and pose economic difficulties, leading to changes in their sense of community.

Thus, human-influenced environmental degradation has hazardous effects both for non-humans and humans. In fact, researchers have found that our psychological well-being diminishes as we degrade the natural world further. Albrecht et al. (2007) examined the relationship between psychopathology and environmental degradation. The authors observed that people often lose the link to their homes as their local environments deteriorate. They coined the term “psychoterratic” illness and defined it as “earth-related mental illness where people’s mental well-being (psyche) is threatened by the severing of ‘healthy’ links between themselves and their home/territory” (p. 95). We lose our “homes” as we change our familiar landscapes and biodiversity through urban development. The authors used the term “solastalgia,” to refer to the longing for our homes that we lost, because the place has changed so much due to incessant development.

For example, residents and workers of New South Wales in Australia experienced solastalgia when the coal-mining and power industries expanded and changed the environment. Energy companies had built large power stations in the region for decades; they polluted the regional landscape, sickening the residents and the workers who were exposed to toxins. One of the respondents said that she received a doctor's advice to flee the area, due to ingesting black smoke and hurting her respiratory system. Another respondent reported that she also had to escape her hometown; because she felt married to the land, she now feels like she is going through a “divorce.” As the power-industries expanded, respondents saw their beloved land become polluted and unlivable. As a result, the respondents experienced a loss in their sense of place.

Broto, Burningham, Carter, and Elghali (2010) also reported that environmental degradation has hazardous consequences for one’s place-based identity. Specifically, they presented a case study of coal ash pollution in Tuzla, a town in North-East Bosnia where

industrial development has been on the rise since the 1960s. The authors conducted semi-structured interviews with 51 residents. Many interviewees complained of the coal ash pouring into their houses. Before the development of the coal ash industry, greenery was a major characteristic of Tuzla; growing vegetables in the garden was a popular household activity. In their downtime, citizens of Tuzla commonly enjoyed drinking tea in their gardens. However, now they cannot enjoy such activities without the ash falling into their cups of tea. One interviewee expressed her sense of loss. Her flowers are now all gone, and “now everything is unhealthy” (p.11). Another interviewee also lamented the stigma that now is associated with Tuzla. He said that others make fun of his town for losing the greenery that it once had. The authors concluded that the coal ash industry altered the relationship between the town and its place. Thus, the Tuzla residents experienced a detrimental impact of environmental degradation on their psyches.

Because nature helps human lives, I was confused about why we have not stopped contributing to environmental degradation. Interestingly, researchers have found that people who appreciate the environment do not necessarily act to protect it. For example, Thompson and Barton (1994) claimed that there are two attitudes towards the environment: ecocentrism and anthropocentrism. One is ecocentric when one hopes to protect the environment for its own sake. The ecocentric person believes that the environment has intrinsic value. In contrast, one is anthropocentric when one hopes to protect the environment for the sake of human beings. The authors predicted that those who lean towards anthropocentrism would engage in less environment-protective behaviors than those who lean towards ecocentrism. They distributed short questionnaires to 129 persons in an American airport. The short questionnaire assessed participants’ beliefs, behavior, affiliation with environmental organizations, and the reasons for their environmental concern. From the results, the authors concluded that ecocentric participants endorsed more conservational behaviors, belonged to environmental organizations, and reported less environmental apathy. In contrast, participants with anthropocentric attitudes endorsed less conserving behavior and less affiliations with environmental groups, thus supporting their predictions.

Nisbet and Zelenski (2011) also explored why many people are less inclined to engage with nature. The authors hypothesized that people hesitate from interacting with

nature because they underestimate the benefit they gain from interacting with natural environments. To test this hypothesis, the authors assigned two groups of participants to walk in an indoor path (a tunnel), or an outdoor path (arboretum), respectively, and measured how much positive affect participants anticipated by walking on the two paths. After the participants walked in the two paths, the authors then measured the extent to which the participants felt positive affect due to their walks. In the results, the authors found a statistical interaction: the outdoors group experienced more positive affect than they anticipated. In contrast, the indoor path group experienced less positive affect than they anticipated. The authors concluded that people tend to underestimate the benefits of walking outdoors and engaging with the natural scenery and thus often hesitate from enjoying the full benefits of nature.

Through human interference, we have become more hurtful and distant in our relationship with nature. Given that our environment is under threat, psychologists need to investigate how we can overcome environmental apathy and deepen our empathy for the natural world. Many psychologists have started to investigate the environmental crisis in a new subfield of psychology, ecopsychology. In ecopsychology, scholars explore the link between ecology and psychology. They pay attention to humans' relationship with nature (e.g. Fisher, 2002). We see that our severed relationship with the environment is one common theme that emerged from the literature review above (Albrecht et al., 2007; Broto, Burningham, Carter, & Elghali, 2010; Vins, Bell, Saha & Hess, 2015). In this study, I will qualitatively explore one way of improving our relationship with nature and offer a relational conceptualization of how we deepen our ties in the framework of Experiential Personal Constructivist Psychology (EPCP).

Experiential Personal Constructivist Psychology

EPCP may be an appropriate theory to analyze our relationship with the natural world, because it attends to the dynamic of diverse beings engaging in deep relationships. EPCP stems from George Kelly's Personal Constructivism. Kelly (1955) argued that we are meaning-making creatures who build a "construct system," a system of meanings through which we see the world. Kelly's sociality corollary serves as the basis for EPCP: "to the extent that one person construes the construction process of another, [that person] may play a role in a social process involving the other person" (p. 95). Based on the

sociality corollary, Leitner (1985) argued that we make meaning together through relationships. On the one hand, one can engage in a relationship with another, which could be affirming in profound ways, but with the possible caveat of being hurt as well. On the other hand, one can stay away from relationships, and be safe from relational injuries while also missing the richness offered by relationships. In the EPCP framework, one needs to engage in affirming relationships, “ROLE relationships” to live a rich and meaningful life (Leitner, 1995, 1999; Leitner & Faidley, 1995). In a ROLE relationship, two or more persons understand each other’s core constructs and construal processes.

Leitner and Faidley (1995) explained further that one can best understand another’s construal process by understanding another’s core “ROLE constructs” (p. 263). They explained that ROLE constructs are “the most important constructs involving our sense in relation...These constructs form the foundation of the interpersonal world.” (p.293). In my interpretation, the phrase “interpersonal *world*” (italics added) implied that meaningful ROLE relationships include interpersonal relationships, human-place relationships, and human-nature relationships. Furthermore, I contend that Leitner and Faidley’s phrase “our sense in relation” means our sense of connection with humans and non-humans, as they do not specify with whom we connect. In fact, many researchers have found that their participants often express high degrees of feeling connected with nature (Davis, Green & Reed., 2009; Dutcher, Finley, Luloff, & Johnson, 2007). As an example, participants in Albrecht et al.’s (2007) study showed that they had intimate connections with their homeland as they spent much time in one place, knowing its history, and caring for its future. As mentioned above, one of the participants used the word “divorce” to describe her escape from a polluted land she once called home, showing a deep connection with the environment. Jacquet and Stedman (2013) offered one explanation for how people can have a deep connection with a place. They stated that, when one has self-defining experiences in one location, the inert landscape changes into a “symbolic extension of self” (p.1287). Jacquet and Stedman stated that a place becomes an interconnected network of meanings, as its residents imbue stories to their physical environments. What is otherwise an inert milieu changes to a part of our meaning making system.

In the framework of EPCP, we run into some problems when we conceptualize being in a ROLE relationship with a place. To be in a ROLE relationship means for one to understand the construal process of another, as well as the other person understanding one's construal processes. If the other is a place, the place must construe my process and I must construe the place. However, one may find it hard to think the place can construe my processes, or that the place has a construal process for me to understand. Two people in an intimate relationship can feel that they understand each other's fundamental worldviews, and perhaps express that they mean a lot to each other. However, a place will never utter words to me in the human language or indicate that it is "listening." Hence, we have two problems: (1) how the place could "understand" our construal process and (2) how I, a human being, can understand the construal processes of the place if we could establish that it has anything that resembles "construal processes."

In response to the problem of how the place could understand one's construal process, I will acknowledge simply that I may not be able to show that a place can understand my construal processes in the way I understand another person's processes. I would argue that we engage in a special type of relationship with places, perhaps like the therapist-client relationship, in that all parties bring vital aspects to the encounter, but in different forms. In the therapeutic ROLE relationship, Leitner (2006) stated, "The client's aliveness is the essential issue here while the therapist's professional constructions facilitate the work of the therapy" (p. 91). Clients present their concerns based on the trust they have for the therapist, while the therapist tries to construe the client. Similarly, in our ROLE relationship with the environment, we will notice that our environment is under threat, much like how a therapist construes the client extensively and recognize the client's suffering. In turn, a place may not understand our construal process extensively, much like a client does not understand many aspects of the therapist's construal processes. However, this does not change the fact that the place needs help.

In response to the problem of how I can understand the construal process of a place, I may not be able to prove that a place has a construing process, but I argue that our construal processes are not too different from the processes in nature. I base my argument on Kelly's (1955) observation that natural processes are like our construing process. For example, Kelly has stated that the "universe is continually changing with

respect to itself” (p. 7). About human construing, he stated, “When constructs are used to predict immediate happenings, they become more susceptible to change or revision” (p.13). From the statements above, Kelly implies that our construal processes and the universe both have change as a common characteristic. Furthermore, Kelly went further than saying they both change, as he pointed out changes in nature is linked with human construal. He stated,

Perhaps [a person] perceived orderliness in the stately procession that marched across the night sky. Perhaps [a person] first saw replication in the rolling of a stone along the ground and, from its rapid succession of events, was able to construct the notion of cycles and epicycles. (p. 74-75)

In the excerpt above, Kelly stated that perhaps we make constructs based on changes we see in the universe. According to Kelly, processes in the universe may be a blueprint for our construct system.

Abram (2010) illustrated a point similar to mine when describing the time that he hiked in the Rocky Mountains. He found himself in the wilderness, walking through the woods, and gazing upon the sky. After immersing himself in nature, he realized that the processes in his mind were intricately tied with the shadow of the woods or movements of the clouds. His thoughts and the natural world moved together, given that he was “thinking with [his] senses” (p.112). As the indeterminate clouds peeked in and out of his vision, so did his thoughts appeared and disappeared from consciousness. He said,

I was beginning to glimpse a complex array of images for mind itself, visible patterns of mental process far more fitting than neurological categories and mechanical descriptions...Here, all around me, was a field of patterned metaphors as precise as one could want for the dynamic life of the psyche” (p.113).

In this quotation, Abram found that his construal processes closely resembled the objects and movements he perceived in the natural world. He speculated that the things, living beings, and their interactions in the natural world are the model for our minds. Abram’s story exemplified the emerging embodied cognition literature (e.g., Anderson, 2003). From the perspective of embodied cognition, our construal processes emerge from the processes that we see in the natural world. Such natural processes are integral to our construal process; we make meaning with nature.

While this may not mean that we understand nature's construal processes, we are looking at processes in nature that resemble our construal processes. One may object that Abram's demonstration is not satisfactory to establish that nature has a construal process for us to understand. However, interpersonal interactions also face the same problem where we cannot "see" or truly know that others are construing. In interpersonal interactions too, we can only see processes that seem like our own construal processes. Therefore, the objection that we need a proof is an impossible criterion to meet, whether it is for human-nature relationship or interpersonal relationships.

Based upon this, one of the primary questions for my study is whether people can form ROLE relationships with the natural world. I explored that question based upon my interviews with participants. As stated above, I needed to find evidence from my participant's experience that they construed nature's processes. In addition, I sought evidence in participants' statements about whether nature construed their processes. If I did not have sufficient evidence, I planned to develop an alternative understanding of the relationships between humans and nature.

If I can have a ROLE relationship with a place, and care for its well-being, then I also need to care for the well-being of the planet, as ecological processes in one place are connected to the planetary ecosystem at large. If I am maltreating nature in one location, then I am maltreating nature in the planet at large, as the world is an amalgamation of diverse beings all in interaction with one another, or an interconnected and integral universe. In the context of constructivist psychology, Kelly (1955) introduced the concept of integral universe as a philosophical assumption. Others have also discussed similar ideas (e.g., Cambray, 2006; Richards, 2001). Kelly illustrated his idea of the interconnected universe stating that there exists a connection between the price of yak milk in Tibet and his typewriter in Ohio. Though he admits that it is implausible at first, he concludes, "But...in the long run, all of these events – the motion of my fingers, the action of the keys, and the price of yak milk – are interlocked." (Kelly, 1955, p. 7) Kelly, hence, stated that every action has repercussions throughout the world.

EPCP theorists (Leitner, 2010, 2012; Leitner & Hayes, 2015) elaborated Kelly's notion of the integral universe. Leitner pointed out that Kelly was opposed to behaviorist theories, and hence contended that Kelly did not limit "actions" to mean only the "outer"

physical movements. Given Kelly's anti-reductionist views, his definition of "action" also would include one's inner experiences. Leitner stated, "My 'actions' then consists of things I am doing, the things I am thinking, the things I am feeling, and so on. Thus, my feelings about a person I care for...are even now affecting the universe in ways that I cannot comprehend" (Leitner, 2010, p. 227). Leitner's inclusion of thoughts and feelings has important implications for the human-nature relationship, namely that human beings' internal processes interconnect with external events that occur in natural world.

Aesthetics

Sewall (2012) called for psychologists to explore art and aesthetics, especially in the context of deepening our relationship with nature. Sewall stated, "In the context of widespread environmental degradation, a relevant and responsible psychology must include whatever inspires and motivates us—making us gasp, weep, and desire. Our hearts must be triggered, and our bodies and emotions engaged" (p.280). Sewall based her idea on her observation that we find it difficult to "gasp, weep, and desire" for nature in modern Western culture. We tend to think and act in individualist and materialistic ways that shift our attention away from nature. Furthermore, as our technology advances, we do less exploring and participating, and more passively consume information often from looking at immobile flat screens in front of us. The more familiar we are with flat screens, the more we lose the depth perception and attention to appreciate the complex terrains of the natural landscape. However, Sewall stated that if we commit to viewing and interacting with the natural world, the rich stimuli therein invoke our attention such that it restores our capacities for perception and attention. Scholars called such idea the Attention Restoration Theory (ART; Kaplan, 1995). The theory arose as researchers demonstrated that nature-related media can restore one's fatigued general attention. For example, Hartig, Korpela, Evans, and Garling (1997) found that participants who were exposed to natural environments showed increased restoration of their attention, compared to when they were exposed to artificial environments.

In another ART study, Berto (2005) exposed college students to two kinds of photographs (nature scenes vs. non-nature scenes). She measured the participants' attention span before and after exposure to the photographs. As one would expect from ART, Berto found improvement in attention capacity only for students who watched

photographs of nature scenes. Adding to Berto's findings, Sewall spoke from her personal experiences that she improved her attention capacity and appreciation for nature by going outside and studying beautiful objects, beings and patterns in the natural world. Based on research and her personal experience, Sewall stated that the act of finding beauty will lead us to pay more attention to nature and avoid further degradation.

I need to be clear about what I mean when I use words like "beauty" or "aesthetics," as these concepts are central to my project. I do not simply use the word "aesthetic" to refer to the state of "relating to beauty." The word "aesthetics" comes from the Greek words "aisthanesthai (to perceive) and "aistheta" (things perceptible). The etymology suggests that our sense of aesthetics is historically connected to noticing and interacting with perceptible things. Of course, each person has different personal, societal and cultural values that influence what is beautiful or ugly. When one person meets another, one construes the other person as beautiful or otherwise based on the perceiver's unique sense of beauty. At first, one might think that the perception of beauty is one-sided, as if only the perceiver is construing. However, the perceived person also presents one's appearance based on a construal process. In this way, perception of beauty is interactive. As with any interaction, we have a choice of whether to become closer to an "other." As our relationships deepen, we find new aspects of the person. When we find aspects of another that we find beautiful, we become fonder of the relationship. For these reasons, I define beauty as the qualities that we find in others, to desire a closer, deeper relationship.

Conversely, I define ugliness as the qualities that repel us from others. We may at first notice aspects of a person that we find ugly. However, as the relationship becomes deeper, we may understand that whatever we judge as ugly is superficial, or that it comes from injuries. As a case example, Leitner (1985) discussed a client, "Tim," who philandered from one woman to another. Tim treated women as an object of conquest. As soon as he was done sleeping with them, he would cut ties with them. Leitner pointed out Tim's way of relating to others was limited, in that he could not understand the experiences of the women with whom he slept. However, after six months of therapy, Tim told Leitner that he found a beautiful woman "trapped inside an ugly body" (p.93).

As Tim understood relationships in a deeper way, he became able to see the beauty inside an ugly exterior.

Based on my definition of ugliness, there are countless events that happen in nature that repel us from the natural world. From natural disasters to mosquito bites, we experience annoyance, pain, and deaths because of natural forces. In contrast to biophilia, Macy (1995) stated that some of us may be inclined to be fearful to the point we disengage with nature to avoid its horrors, using the term “biophobia.” However, as the “Tim” example shows, if we can learn to relate in meaningful ways, the ugliness that bothered us may not hinder us from embracing the beauty of nature. Leitner (2009) states that being in a ROLE relationship means also to understand the construal process of the other person, even when it might seem ugly. Though we may have many of unpleasant contacts with nature, we should not immediately decide to turn away. Of course, some people can be so repulsive that I should avoid them. In a similar way, some parts of nature could be so ugly that we should not be near them, but we should not be turning away from nature based on the ugliness of some aspects.

Constructivists also have discussed seeing the world in aesthetic ways. For example, Thomas and Schlutsmeyer (2004) based their concept of the “aesthetic eye” (p. 316) on their interpretation of Kelly’s (1955) description of construing, when he stated, “Only when [a person] attunes [one’s] ear to recurrent themes in the monotonous flow does [one’s] universe start to make sense. Like a musician, [the person] must phrase [one’s] experience in order to make sense out of it” (p. 52). From Kelly’s statement “phrasing one’s experience,” we see that the process of construing is an act of abstracting patterns in the universe. Thomas and Schlutsmeyer interpreted Kelly’s attunement as “a felt sense of being touched by something beyond me, a sense of awareness of my finiteness in the total cosmos, a sense that something else is there that goes beyond any universe we can comprehend or ever fully understand” (p. 316). In this way, Thomas and Schlutsmeyer termed the attunement to the recurrent flow of the universe as the “aesthetic eye” (p.316). With the aesthetic eye, we see the sensual and artistic side of others, and gasp at the awe of their processes. Through the aesthetic eye, to be in a ROLE relationship with another person means to see the beauty in the ways the other makes meaning of the world. The other person also will shape the world with an aesthetic eye.

We can contrast the aesthetic eye to the literal understandings of a human being that breaks down a person into isolated variables. With the aesthetic eye, one sees another person as a holistic moving picture. Through the aesthetic eye, we can accept the mysterious aspects of another human being. If we do not understand one part of a person, we do not force the differences to conform to our literal framework. In the process, one becomes impoverished looking for a concrete explanation, eventually feeling distant from the other person. As opposed to the purely literal attempt, one can wonder at the mystery with the aesthetic eye.

Kelly (1955) said that to construe is to attune to the recurrent themes of the *universe*. A person construes not only their interactions with human others, but the various processes in the world that are larger than human-to-human interactions. A person can use the aesthetic eye to see the natural world and respect the mysterious processes of the natural world therein. Kelly's premise that every action has repercussions implies that we cause ripples in places hidden from us, as a large part of the universe remains mysterious to human beings. However, seen aesthetically, we would accept the mystery and be humbled by the mysterious forces that are more than human.

Through the aesthetic eye, the ocean would not be a convenient dumping ground for our toxic waste. The earth would not be a storehouse of resources that exist for human consumption. With the aesthetic eye towards the planet, we can see the beauty in natural beings and their connections. The place that I live, the soil that I stand on, or the trees that surround me will not appear as isolated and static; rather, I will come to see them as an artistic creation -- developed, created, by something else. I will come to see that the world is a living art piece made with different materials, patterns, and energies all interconnected. By noticing the world's art, I acknowledge that creativity is a force of nature, human or otherwise.

By using the aesthetic eye and rediscovering nature's beauty, we can be enchanted with the significance of nature in the lives of human beings (Berry, 1988). We could become more willing to relate with nature if we have sensuous experiences in the natural world. In art-making, we use our bodily senses to create something that we see as beautiful. Based on my definition of beauty, our art piece will be something with which we will desire an intimate relationship. If the art piece is about the natural world, we will

desire to cultivate a stronger relationship with nature. If we can make art according to our own sense of beauty, our participation will induce a sensual appreciation for nature's beauty (Matilsky, 2000). Many others (e.g. Hillman, 1995; Kidner, 2012; Richards, 2001) echoed Anderson and Guyas (2012), stating that one can realize the beauty in the environment with art-making. In art-making, we become attuned to our own unique sense of aesthetics and become comfortable with whatever material we use. Through art-making, we could be in a closer relationship the natural world.

Scholars recently have attempted to enhance the connection with nature through film-making. Harness and Drossman (2011) investigated the role of film-making in facilitating ecological literacy among at-risk high-school youths. After film-making, students stated that they became more active in protecting the environment. According to the students, through the film making experience, they gained an experiential understanding of caring for and protecting the environment. While other researchers (Bahk, 2011; Barbas, Paraskevopoulos, & Stamou, 2009; Lowe et al., 2006; Nolan, 2010; Norman, 2000) investigated the effect of viewing films on the environment, Harness and Drossman are the only researchers to study the effect of film-making itself on our relationship with nature. Harness and Drossman stated that there is great potential in environmental film-making to understand our actions toward the environment. As they were the first to study the effect of environmental film-making, they urged others to research further about environmental film-making.

My Own Film

After reading Harness and Drossman (2011), I decided to make a film about my connection with the natural world, using my own sense of aesthetics. Below, I provide a detailed account of my film-making process. I have three purposes in telling this account. One, I will attempt to integrate my scholastic knowledge about nature with my personal story using my own sense of aesthetics and show that film is a good medium for combining self-expression and research. Second, because I planned to have my participants make films, by providing a detailed account of my own experience, I hoped to have an informative account that I could share with my participants about how they can make their own films. Third, as a qualitative researcher, I have the responsibility to tell my own story about how I made my art, when I asked others to use art to tell their

stories. I do this in the spirit of acknowledging my own values and perspectives as a researcher, an important step in qualitative research (Leitner, Hayes & Imai, 2015).

I decided to make an autobiographical film about my relationship with the natural world. In doing so, I reflected deeply about my past and how I struggled to connect with natural beings and entities. I attribute my struggle to the five major relocations between Japan, England and the United States. Torn between different cultures, I became obsessed with questions about identity and my place in the world. As I moved from one place to another, I gradually became distant from the natural world. Connecting with nature felt too real, and I also had to face its fragility – I realized that everything that is alive will eventually perish, and that with whatever connection I make, I also will risk disconnection. Eventually, I developed a preference for spending time in industrial landscapes as I found a sense of invulnerability in their geometric shapes.

However, as I became an adult, I felt increasingly hollow as I lived within these industrial landscapes. I only recently rediscovered the richness and wonder that characterize the relationship with the natural world. I found that I can enrich my life by enrooting myself in my local community. I found my roots stronger and more stable as I walked the trails behind the Psychology Building and interacted with the natural world that existed far earlier than the establishment of Miami University. I went to the local farmer's market, bought food from the local farmers, and realized that the taste in my mouth and the food in my stomach come from the farmers that I talked to and the land that I lived on. When I adopted a cat, I realized that I was not alone and that I live on this planet with other beings. Through these experiences, I felt less detached and alien in this interconnected universe.

I captured my story in my film, “At home with Kale” (Imai, 2013: viewable at <https://youtu.be/EHPt4JIKFxQ>). The film lasts 15 minutes and 51 seconds. I started the film with footages of my cat, Kale, with a narration stating that I adopted her from a shelter. In the narration, I stated that she had been in the shelter for 5 years and all her kittens were adopted during her stay. I also disclosed that, after 2 months of having her, the veterinarian told me that Kale might have a tumor in her nose, in which case we would need to put her down. After clips of Kale, I included shots of me walking around the Psychology Building. In the footage, I show the straight lines in the architecture of

the psychology building. I also included clips of skyscrapers in Japan that prominently feature straight lines. In the narration, I discussed my impressions of the architecture of the Psychology Building and the skyscrapers of Japan. I also spoke of the parallel between the straight lines in such architectures and the staleness of mainstream psychology, including the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In addition, I narrated how I discovered EPCP and how I became open to having relationships with the natural world. As I narrated my newfound engagement with the natural world, the film cuts to footages of me walking into the nature trails behind the Psychology Building. I discussed how I find nature to have beauty, and how I have been missing a connection with nature in the past. I also made a parallel to my relationship with Kale, a cat, a non-human with whom I recently connected. Whenever I mention Kale, I show short clips of her. As I walk through the trails and show the trees, leaves, and other flora, I also included my own drawings. In my narration, I read excerpts from writers and scholars stating that Psychology needs to be concerned about new creative ways of engaging with nature, as I discussed my personal realization that engaging in art and nature have become meaningful in my life. In the end, I showed a clip of Kale, stating that she has made a “beautiful recovery” after a week of receiving antibiotics, implying that she has gotten healthy and has not been put down.

I realized that film would be an ideal medium for telling my story, given that I could integrate various media, including photography, drawing, and music as well as story-making in the form of film. With its multimedia format, the film-maker must use many senses and integrate them into a coherent whole. As such, I used my vision to capture the beauty, my hearing to coordinate my narration and the accompanying music, and my sense of kinetics as I moved my camera to take the ideal footage. I went through three stages in my film-making.

In the first stage of the film making, I explored how I wanted to tell my story. At first, although I knew that I wanted to explore my transition from the urban to the natural, I was unsure about how to represent the transition through symbols. I made connections between themes (e.g., separation from embodied interactions) and locations (e.g., the Psychology Building) by walking around and making observations in tentative ways. For

example, I wondered about the meaning of the colors in the wild. I took mental note of the various hues of green on the leaves, and the brownness of the dead leaves that I stepped upon. As the brown leaves informed me about their lifelessness, I felt as if I could sense an inherent connection between my aesthetic perception and the cycle of life. Delving deeper, I saw more vivid interconnections: the green leaves were connected to the brown stems, the stems to the branch, the branch to the tree, the tree to the soil, and so on. As I paid more attention, I also took note of the complexity of the shapes that surrounded me. Although everything that I saw was interdependent, each one of them had its own unique appearance: the branches of the trees, the shapes of the leaves, the flow of the water, and the slope of hill. None of them was a replica of another, each thing in its own shape.

In the second stage, I did the actual filming. As the subject matter concerned my own psychological development, I believed that it was crucial for me to take all footage from the first-person point of view. So, I recorded all footage by myself; if I were to have used another person to film me from a third-person point of view, then viewers would be looking at me, rather than through me. In the third person point of view, viewers would see me as a separate person, and would not see the story through me (Rosenthal, 2010); I set out to the places that were familiar to me, including the Psychology Building and the nature trails behind the building. Prior to filming, I did not have any “script” to follow. I relied on the sense of being evoked. By “evoked,” I refer to the moments where I could not help but fix my sight on something because of its beauty, ugliness, or sheer intrigue.

I shot the footage in approximately a month, based on the exploration that I had done during my first stage. For example, in the Psychology Building, I used the straight lines to represent the linearity of thought in mainstream psychology, Western industrial society, as well as the prison that I built for myself to avoid embodied encounters. I walked around the building and took footages of those lines from whatever perspective the straight lines and rectangles stood out. Out on the nature trails, I noticed that I had a different focus; I no longer saw linear architecture. I took shots of the uniquely shaped flowers, leaves, branches, and roots that I found captivating. Unlike the Psychology Building where every object was always in the same place, the natural world was always in flux. I filmed the natural scene more spontaneously than in the Psychology Building –

I had unexpected encounters with puddles and fallen branches from a storm that preceded my visit. I also realized the contrast between the sun and the shades that I did not notice during the first phase. I took footage of the moving shadows, and their superimpositions onto the plants. In the Psychology Building, I tried to follow the lines embedded in the architecture. I would at times shake the camera intentionally to express the distortion and frustration I felt from feeling forced to follow straight lines.

Before moving into the third phase, I heard the distressing news about Kale. The veterinarian said euthanasia was a possibility. I found it difficult to describe my feelings when I found out that my cat might not have much longer to live. I could not do justice to my grief by using human language. In my grief, I felt the compulsion to integrate the story about Kale into the film. I used Kale, a natural “other” to represent the natural world with whom I wanted to reconnect. I thought that I could make meaning of my grief for Kale if I told a story about her. Hence, I shot footage of Kale and made it a major part of my narrative. I found that adding footage of Kale added more personal relevance to my art-making. As I found the theme of relating with the natural-other in both my plans for the film and my personal relationship with Kale, I chose to interweave Kale’s story with my own. I realized that I could thereby synthesize the past with the here-and-now.

In the third phase, I engaged in the editing process that took approximately another month; I found recurrent patterns of camera movements and visual symbols in my footages. Based on the patterns, I made a visual story as I connected these symbols and movements. Without any verbal narrative, I organized the visuals to tell a coherent story. The story-telling involved editing the footage so that one could see that I was walking around in the Psychology Building → looking outside → going outside. I interspersed Kale’s story as a parallel to my rekindling with the natural. I shifted between the past and the present as I told my story; I needed to convey visually that my past story was interwoven with my present story, but still maintain a sense of flow inherent to my stream of consciousness. I paid attention to how I was moving my camera – if I was moving the camera from left to right in one shot, I could use another shot that followed the same movement, and then connect them together into one extended clip. In this way, I could write a coherent story through similar camera movements even when one footage is

from the Psychology Building in Ohio, and another a view of myself looking down upon the city of Yokohama.

I added the voiceover after I edited the footage. I then wrote a narrative that made my internal dialogue explicit as I looked at the visuals. As the scenes progressed, I tried to continue the oral story while incorporating the feelings that the visual images evoked in me. As I engaged in this process, I thought of the “presentational symbolism” that used words in loose and creative ways so that I could represent meanings in a poetic sense (Guthrie, 1991; Langer, 1951). In doing so, I often used metaphors that resonated with the visual events in the story. For example, as I saw the straight lines in the Psychology Building I thought of the abstract lines in the DSM that distinguished between “normal” and “disorder.” Hence, I discussed the frustrations of working with the DSM as a clinical psychology student. I also inserted academic examples that helped me to clarify my internal dialogue. By making my internal dialogue as the running thread of my voiceover, I made a film that was not just a didactic documentary, but also a personal memoir.

After multiple revisions of the film, I presented the final product to an audience of approximately five hundred people at a “Creativity and Madness” conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico (Imai & Leitner, 2013). I was overwhelmed by affirmation. Many audience members came up to me after my presentation and thanked me for sharing my story. They shared their own experiences with nature and said that my story moved them. I also felt that I changed my own relationship with natural beings by making the film. I appreciated Kale in a deeper way than before. I realize that she had become closer to me due to my making art with and about her. Furthermore, after making this film, I spend more time outside. I feel pleasant being outside, as I notice the artfulness embedded in this universe.

My Study

As I made my own film, I became curious about how others could tell stories about nature through the medium of film. I wondered whether others’ relationships with non-human beings could deepen, like mine did, through film-making. I also wanted to see how people’s engagement with nature, along with their films, fit the conceptual framework of EPCP. Based on my curiosity and the research reviewed above, I conducted a study where I asked others to make their own films about the natural world.

To see the effects of film-making, I interviewed the participants once before the film-making, and once afterwards.

Through this study, I aimed to investigate whether others can reexamine and affirm their relationships with the natural world through a film-making process, and to analyze the relational dynamics with natural beings through the lens of EPCP. I wanted to explore whether each participant could deepen a relationship with nature to the point it was a ROLE relationship or whether I would need to develop an alternative EPCP conceptualization of the nature-human relationship.

Method

Participants

I recruited a total of four adult participants from universities in Ohio and Texas, as well as from the community of central Texas. After I started my study in Ohio, I moved to central Texas to complete my Psychology Internship. I found two of my participants in Ohio, and another two in central Texas. Although I did not make being a student a requirement of this study, three of my participants were university students. One participant was a community member in central Texas.

I recruited participants by posting recruitment advertisements in flyer form (Appendix A) at University campuses and local establishments. I also posted digital copies of the fliers in local online groups (e.g., film groups on facebook) as well as online bulletin boards. I instructed interested individuals to contact me directly at the email address listed on the flyer. I also went into university classrooms and discussed my study with students in the class. I informed students about what their potential involvement would entail. I then answered their questions and handed out a sign-up sheet for interested students to leave their name and contact information. I e-mailed those who responded with detailed information about the study and asked if they would like to participate.

Based on these attempts to recruit, I started with a total of seven participants who signed the informed consent and the first interview. All seven of them expressed interests in making a film and shared basic ideas about natural beings they wanted to make the subject matter. However, after the first interview, three of these participants became non-responsive despite multiple attempts to reach them. In their first interviews, these three

participants shared basic concepts they wanted to explore in the film. Furthermore, the depths of their relationships with nature did not seem different from the other participants who completed the film. However, I observed the subject matters of the films were not as concrete as the four who completed the film. For example, one participant discussed showing nature as a metaphor for the ways in which one views the world. While this participant had elaborate philosophical ideas to support his main thesis, he did not have a plan as to how to film it. I suspect that, after the first interview, participants like him lost the motivation to visualize the abstract ideas. I needed two interviews from the participants, one before and another after the film-making, given I was interested in the effects of film-making, and how it changes the participants' nature-human relationships. In the Results section, I will discuss the data from the four participants (Miriam, Alex, Melissa, and Cassy) who completed their films.

Procedure

In the data-collecting process, I met with the participants for three times: a meeting to explain the study and sign the informed consent, and two semi-structured interviews. For all meetings, I met participants where they felt comfortable (e.g., university laboratories, libraries, and restaurants). Before the first meeting, I exchanged contact information with the potential participants via email, as well as a link to my film, "At home with Kale" so that I could give an example of a film that explored the relationship between human beings and nature. While I presented my film as an example, I explained that they would not need to do a film like mine. In addition, I gave them a description of the method for how they would complete the study in a step-by-step format (Appendix B). I then reviewed confidentiality with my participants. I explained that I will not distribute their films publicly, but that I plan to show them to my dissertation committee as well as other academic avenues. I asked the participants to sign the informed consent (Appendix C), if they were willing to participate in the study. For three of the participants (Miriam, Alex, and Cassy), signing the informed consent and the first interview happened at the same sitting. For these participants, I conducted the interview immediately after they signed the consent. For Melissa, we met for the first semi-structured interview later given that she had another commitment after the informed consent.

In the first interview, I often started the interview by asking, “Do you have any ideas for the film you want to make?” so that I could ask about the relationships they might showcase. I inquired about what they liked about their experience with natural beings. For example, with Miriam, I asked, “What do you think it is about nature that excites you so much?” As Miriam discussed her reasons for liking nature, she started talking about the history of her relationship with nature. As I heard about her history of appreciating natural beings, I had the chance to learn about her background. For example, I would ask something like, “To get a little bit of background, when you were talking about doing nature things with your family, where did that happen, where are you from?” With these questions, I could explore my participants’ encounters with natural beings intertwined with their identities and relationships with other humans.

I also asked about their experience with art-making or film-making. For example, with Alex I asked, “I also wanted to ask you more about previous experiences in art in general, whether it’s appreciating art or making art?” With these questions, I wanted to gauge their comfort level with creating an artistic project, so I could see later whether their attitudes towards art affect the results. For the first interview, I had a list of questions ready to use (Appendix D). Examples of these questions were: “Can you talk about your relationship with something that is not human, something that is from nature?” “How have you known this [natural] thing?” “How much have you known him or her (or thing)?” However, I asked them only if the participants could not elaborate on their relationships with nature. After we finished the interview, I reminded the participants that the next step was the shooting of footages. I stated that they could use whatever camera they chose to shoot the film. I offered them a rental camera from a public library, but all participants stated that they would either use their own camera or rent a camera on their own.

As I discussed shooting the film, I told participants that that they could film events in which they spend time with nature or their non-human animal. Some participants said that they had pictures or videos from past events and footages. I let them know that they could use previously shot footage in which they interact with nature or their pets. In shooting new footages, I explained that I am not looking for a “right” or “correct” footage and encouraged them to shoot whatever footage that captures their

relationship with nature. I suggested that they shoot for a minimum of two weeks and a maximum of two months, approximately the time that I needed to shoot my own preliminary video. I also encouraged them to shoot at least 30 minutes of footage, so that they could produce a video ranging from approximately 5 minutes to 20 minutes. I decided this time frame based on my own film-making experience described above, a 16-minute video that took me about 2 months to make. Within my suggested time frame, participants often proposed their own timelines for completing the films. For example, Cassy told me about her plans to go on a camping trip with her dog, and that she would take footage from the trip; as such, she let me know that she would not complete the shooting until her trip was over. I followed participants' own proposed timelines for my check-ins; if I did not hear back from them by their own proposed completion date, I checked-in to ask about the status of the film.

Lastly, I informed the participants that I would be available through email, in person, on the phone or Skype, if they wished. None of the participants wished for any additional meetings. As participants told me they were finished shooting the footage, I offered an appointment in which I could tutor on the basic steps in editing of the film. Miriam and Alex accepted my offer about tutoring. Melissa and Cassy declined, stating that they already know how to edit, or that they would learn on their own.

For the optional editing appointment, I met with Miriam and Alex individually in a public library with computers available for us to use. I tutored the editing process with the library's computers, as the library had multiple editing software installed, such as iMovie and Final Cut Pro. I asked Miriam and Alex to bring the footage they shot, so that they could use their own footage when they learned the basic steps of editing. I taught them how to upload the footage onto the hard disc, as well as how to use the interface to cut and paste together. As I instructed them, I let them know that I did not have expectations about receiving an expertly edited film. Rather, I explained that editing is more of an art than a science – if they “felt” that it was right to keep one shot long, then I instructed them to follow their heart. After instructing them about the editing process, I gave them another month or two to finish editing the film. Through my personal video making experience, I found that I easily could edit my recorded footage into an approximately 5 to 20-minute long video in a month. As with the filming process, I told

the participants that I would be available through email, or by in-person or online appointment.

All participants e-mailed me that they had finished the film between 1-3 months after our first interview. I asked them to send me the completed film in whatever form convenient to them. Two of the participants uploaded the films on streaming sites, such as Vimeo or Youtube. Two other participants sent me their films as e-mail attachments. I watched their films and took note of points that stood out to me. I noted parts of the films that intrigued me about what the participant was trying to convey or confused me about what was going on. For example, I took note of the music that Miriam used in her film, so that I could ask about her thoughts behind the song choice in the second interview. In another example, I wrote down quotations that Melissa used in her film, so that I could ask her why she thought to include quotes. I then contacted the participants about meeting for the final interview and we decided on the time and place to meet.

In the final interview, I asked participants about general impressions of their film-making experience (e.g., “How was your experience making the film”). Using the notes I took while watching their films, I asked about the decision-making process in their film-making. I asked about reasons why they thought to include or exclude certain materials in the film, so that I could gain insight about the creative process. For example, I noticed that Alex’s movie did not contain any voiceover narration. Hence, I asked about his thinking process behind his decision not to include the narration. Furthermore, I inquired about stories behind the scenes. Some participants took footage from events that they planned before they started their participation in their study, and I asked questions about those events. For example, Cassy shot footage on her camping trip with her pet dog. I asked Cassy about the camping trip, and what she wanted to shoot versus what she ended up shooting. (e.g., “So you mentioned that there were images of what you wanted to shoot, and then there were things that you ended up shooting. Could you go into what those differences were?”) Other participants shot footage from outings they took solely for making the film. For example, Melissa went to the park with a relative and had him take footage of her walking and meditating. For participants like Melissa, I asked about the reasons why she chose particular locations (e.g., “Could you talk more about reason behind the choice of choosing that park.”) I also asked about the enjoyable and

challenging parts of the film-making (e.g., “Could you talk about what you liked about making this film?”), and whether they would make a short film again, as I was curious about whether the participants enjoyed making the art.

A main research question was about whether the film-making deepened their appreciation with nature. Hence, I asked about the changes in their nature-human relationship directly (e.g., “Did your relationship with nature change due to making the movie?”) In addition to nature as a whole, I asked participants about their relationship with their beloved pet, natural entity, or anything else that they made the subject matter of the film. (“how about your relationship with Cody. Has it deepened because of making this movie?”) As I asked these questions, I paid attention to whether the participant could understand the process of nature in a deeper way. For example, as Cassy stated that she took all sounds out of her film to show the perspective of her deaf dog, I asked her, “Let me ask about the big decision that you made, to have the whole film in mute. You had talked a little bit about the reason behind that, but if you wouldn’t mind elaborating on that?” I was interested in how she became attuned to her dog’s process through the film-making.

Like the first interview, I had prepared questions such as “How did the relationship with nature change after you made this movie” “How has this project influenced your well-being?” or “What new things did you learn about yourself by working on this project?” (Appendix D) However, again, I asked these questions only when the conversation came to a lull and otherwise allowed for an organic flow in the conversation. Finally, I thanked them for participating in the project and informed them that I would let them know when I finish my study.

Data Analysis

After I had completed my data collection, I personally transcribed all recordings of interviews. I present the interviews in Appendix E. However, I redacted identifying information to protect the confidentiality of the participants. I also falsified aspects of their identities and lives to protect their anonymity further. I also removed many fillers (e.g. “um” “like,” etc.) as they made it hard to read. In all other aspects, I presented the interviews verbatim. After transcription, I read each interview and took note of themes that emerged. I chose certain statements as meaningful based on whether they aligned

with certain EPCP concepts, such as ROLE relationship or the interconnected universe. I then compared different participants' interviews and identified common patterns. I also reviewed the literature relevant to ecology and art to build a theoretical framework to understand the responses of the participants. I went through a cyclical process of reading the interviews and reading the literature, so that I could go through multiple steps of confirming the coherence between the participants' experiences and the theories. I did not conduct a member check (the process of showing the analyses to the participants to see if my interpretations are valid); if I were to have done the member check, I would have needed to explain the theory of EPCP for the participants to validate my conceptualizations. I suspected that such explanation of the theory would affect the participants' responses to my questions. Hence, rather than doing a member check, I repeatedly reviewed the interviews to ensure that my EPCP conceptualizations did not diverge from the participants' original statements. Through the cyclical process of reviewing the interviews and literature, I felt secure in the validity of my interpretations. Furthermore, in the results, I will provide the reader with concrete illustrations of my conceptualizations, allowing the reader to form an opinion as to the veracity of my results.

In the Results below, I present the participants' account of their experiences in film-making, along with detailed descriptions of their films. I wrote a section for each participant, which I will present in the order of recruitment. In each section, I will first describe the participant. I then will present the data from the first interview. After the description of the first interview, I will give a detailed description of their film. I then will present the data from the second interview, with attention to the deepening nature-human relationship, as well as its EPCP analysis. I will end the section with a summary of findings. I organized the participants' responses by themes, so they may not be in the chronological order in which we spoke. Furthermore, I did not include all relevant responses given by participants for the sake of eliminating redundancy. However, I will provide the entire interviews in appendix E.

Results

Miriam

About Miriam. Miriam is a white female-identified 20-year old student at a University in Central Ohio. When I saw her in person for the first time, her excitement was palpable. Before I started recording, she began to talk about her ideas for the film, prompting me to ask her to wait until I could turn on the voice recorder. Miriam gave me the impression that she could not wait to talk about her plans for the short film. She struck me as extraverted and jovial during our interactions, answering my questions often with a smile. With her excitement, I found it pleasant to carry on our conversations.

In addition to her sanguine exterior, Miriam impressed me with her intellectual curiosity and passion. In fact, her academic enthusiasm was already evident in her e-mails, as she wrote that my study was “extremely fascinating” especially for a Psychology and Sustainability major like her. Miriam excitedly discussed her interests in nature throughout the interviews. She stated that her friends also know her to be a nature-lover as she was often the most enthusiastic about outdoors activities. During interviews, I found out that Miriam had a strong bond with her family members, as she affably talked about her parents teaching her about natural processes and taking family trips to nature-oriented places. She focused on her family trip to Yellowstone National Park during our interviews, as she sought to use footages from her trip for her film project. Through Miriam’s participation, I came to know her as a caring person with a deep affection for her friends and family.

First interview. In the first interview, Miriam discussed studying environmental sustainability and building a career in finding solutions for environmental problems. She saw the film project as an example of how she might interest people in becoming more environment-friendly. Miriam also described her history of affiliating with nature; she stated that she grew up in a family that taught her about natural beings and their habitats. She stated that she likes nature as a whole system, rather than a singular component, such as an animal or a plant. Throughout the first interview, I noticed themes of learning about natural beings through her human relationships.

In the following excerpt, she pointed out the need to connect “science” (environmental events) and “society” (human behavior), so that human beings can behave in sustainable ways in the context of problems such as global warming:

I was initially really intrigued by psychology, but then I always had a passion for science and the outdoors so I wanted to find a way to combine the two. I knew that with a Psychology major, I had room in my schedule to pursue a Sustainability major, so then in my science classes I got to learn about nature, natural forces, natural resources and everything. I also got to pair that with the human aspect, and I found throughout my studies that there is a strong connection between. And right now, in the world of sustainability and conserving resources, for a lot of scientists, the missing link is the connection between science and society because we have the science that global warming is occurring. We know that the world is changing, but we don’t know how to get people to be involved and kind of to dive into the issue

In the excerpt above, Miriam discussed a need for others to be involved in the issue of global warming, and her motivations were in the intersection between “psychology” and “natural forces.” With this statement, Miriam touches on the concept of transpersonal responsibility (Adame & Leitner, 2011), that is, human beings’ responsibility for beings beyond immediate interpersonal relationships. Miriam’s sense of transpersonal responsibility was the source for her academic goals. She discussed her role in the gap between science and society, as she says:

I want to be the bridge between science, nature, and humans. Then I also picked up a marketing minor because I was really interested in digital marketing and the creative aspects between how we can put information out there in a way that is psychologically pleasing to people and psychologically swaying. So, combining green marketing and green marketing strategies with sustainability and psychology

Through a digital medium, she hoped to show other human beings the wonders of nature. She was looking for a creative way to encourage people to be more environment-conscious. She expressed enthusiasm for the video project, as she stated, “I’m excited to do something that is psychologically pleasing to people in a video form that is therapeutic

for me and people who are watching it. And combines nature and psychology.” Miriam’s reference to showing the environment in a way that is “psychologically pleasing” was reminiscent of Sewall’s statement that art could trigger our hearts to care for our relationship with nature. Miriam too identified art as a therapeutic way to communicate the importance of nature.

She later talked more about her efforts to protect nature: “I have always been interested in getting involved in nature conservancy and national geographic and their efforts to preserve and conserve what’s natural, I think one of the reasons why I want to do that, is so people, humans, future generations can appreciate it too because I have gotten so much out of it.” Miriam elaborated on her environmentalism, showing her understanding that whatever benefits her also could benefit others. As she essentially said that “why I want to [be involved in nature conservancy], is so...future generations can appreciate it,” she hinted that nature’s condition will deteriorate in the future, if we do not make efforts to protect it.

Miriam stated that she planned to make her film out of the footages that she shot during a family vacation in Yellowstone National Park. She described her experience at Yellowstone National Park as “life changing.” She elaborated, “everything was so breathtaking and just the expanse of nature that I was able to experience in one week was unlike anything that I’ve ever been in before.” Here, Miriam stated that the power of the “expanse of nature” comes from the fact that it was such a unique experience. She later described this in more detail:

...All throughout the park it’s kind of like one giant volcano basically. And so that’s where the hot springs come from and the geysers and everything. To see those rising up from the snow in the winter and to see the bison that have been there forever, and all the wildlife combined together, and to learn about the natural forces that shaped that part, and the power that rises up from the earth constantly, that’s just the only place in the entire world that’s like that. To be able to experience it in the extreme of winter season, just you know, has really changed my perspective.

Here, she listed the various non-human beings she saw, while mentioning the significance of the history (“the bison that have been there forever”). Miriam hinted at a

theme she makes more explicit later, that she experiences nature as a system of beings and forces, not merely as singular being. In the above excerpt, she was experiencing nature and its inner workings (“the natural forces that shaped that part”) on a bodily level, as she said she experienced it “in the extreme of winter seasons” which implies she was feeling the temperature with her body. As she stated that it changed her perspective, her encounter with nature at Yellowstone had a profound effect on her construct system. Her understanding of the processes that underlie the nature in Yellowstone, along with the impact they had on her, suggested that she was construing nature’s processes.

In another statement, Miriam provided more context to the lack of comparable experiences, saying, “what I have here in ‘the real world,’ a ‘built world’ ...it’s just so different than what is natural and what’s real.” Miriam said “real” twice during her statement. However, she hinted at the differences between her Yellowstone experience and the “built” world. Her experiences in Yellowstone are *natural*, in contrast to the *built* world. In this way, her experiences in Yellowstone and outside Yellowstone differ in the level of how natural they are. The video then would be a documentation of Miriam’s experiences in the natural world that she hopes to bring back to the artificial world.

Miriam also discussed the history of her relationship with nature, saying that nature has been a part of her life since her childhood. “Nature has always been my outlet and like my passion. Whenever I see an image of a rainforest, or of natural scenery, it always excites me. I love *National Geographic*’s, I love learning that kind of stuff.” She illustrated the word “nature” with rainforest or natural scenery, but I was not sure if she was talking about relationships with specific natural beings or nature as a whole. She clarified, stating the following: “I’ve always loved how different parts of nature interact...I like ecology, and systems, and the whole environment. I love the idea of the ecosystem and how all aspects of nature are interrelated...I’ve never been drawn to one particular being, or one particular aspect of nature.” The “nature” that Miriam loves is not a singular being, but rather, an interaction. It is the relationship that connects different beings and make up the environment. I recalled Miriam’s earlier statements in which she appreciated the interactions in Yellowstone, or the causal relationships in nature she observed during childhood.

I found that Miriam's passion for nature was intertwined with memories of her family, as she recounts in the excerpt below:

So, I'm from Ohio. And my mom grew up in Michigan; my dad grew up in Cincinnati. So, I always grew up in the Midwest. And my dad grew up on a farm on a hill, living up in the woods with his whole family and so he always spent his whole childhood running through the woods, and riding horses and doing stuff outdoors, he always lived outside throughout his whole childhood. So, he would always take me and my siblings into the woods, and he would take us and teach us about how the Native Americans lived in the forest because that was a passion of his, because learning about Native Americans and how they ran and how they lived off of the land. And he always reminded us of that. So, from a young age I was always kind of intrigued by that and always wanted to be in nature.

From Miriam's statements, we can see the connection between nature-human relationships and human-human relationships. Leitner and Faidley (1995) articulated that we often grow reverence for non-humans after we learn to revere other human beings. As such, Miriam discussed how her relationship with her father has been central in facilitating her relationship with nature. In fact, from Miriam's descriptions, we see that her love of nature has been passed down from her father, along with the inclination to teach others to be aware of nature.

Furthermore, in the following statement, Miriam emphasized how her relationship with nature was a central force in her academic pursuits: "So whenever I was out in nature, my parents were always teaching me at the same time...They were always like 'that's a blue heron, and this is this kind of fish, and they eat that because and rain comes because'...so there was always a because and an explanation so I always loved like being able to be out in nature so I could understand and know what was happening and what was going on." In this way, Miriam focused on how her relationship with nature involved learning the names of animals, their diet, and the environment they live in. Furthermore, Miriam's love for nature was tied to learning the relationships between the various elements, as she spoke about how "there was always a 'because.'" Her learning about these relationships in nature tied in with her previous statement that, for Miriam, nature is not one being. Rather, nature is a collection of interactions between various other-than-

human beings (bird, fish, rain). Miriam's observation ties in with the EPCP concept of the interconnected universe, as she points out how one process leads to another and comprises the eco-system at large. As she gained more knowledge from her parents, her intellectual curiosity became a fuel for becoming closer with nature.

Miriam also discussed the aspects of nature that are beneficial to her mood. For example, she stated, "Just being outside is enough for me to feel better. When I'm sitting outside on a pretty day, I already feel better, just because the sun is shining and because I feel like I'm outside. And just like seeing the blue sky or even seeing it on a rainy day, the weather is an aspect of nature...." She stated that being out in nature has an immediate impact ("I already feel better") on improving her moods, echoing researchers (e.g., Greenway, 1995) who discussed psychological benefits of being outdoors. She elaborated, "When I haven't had a lot of time to be outside, then I start to think like, oh I really need to be outside, I want to be outside doing stuff and it starts to bring me down because it's a stress release for me to be able to be outside in nature, so it definitely has an effect on the mood." As Miriam stated that she feels more unwell ("starts to bring me down") without exposure to outdoors, being outside is a need for her emotional wellness, rather than a luxury. With these statements, Miriam supported Wilson's (1984) biophilia hypothesis that human beings have an emotional affiliation towards nature.

Miriam also reported that spending time together with her family was an important aspect of her experiences at Yellowstone. She said her family served as witnesses for her experiences in Yellowstone. Her statement spoke to the importance of validation by others. With having her family as an audience, she could express her unique experiences at Yellowstone to which others could remind her that her experience was "real."

I think that sharing the experience with others was important. I think that if I experienced it on my own, I would've gotten something out of it, but there was a certain level of frustration in that I couldn't have the shared experience, like I want to talk about it with other people but they wouldn't understand. So, having my family members there to talk about it, and I can say things and they get what I'm saying, I think that aspect was important in making me feel good about the experience.

Miriam also stated that she wanted to share experiences of nature with people other than her family through the film. She stated, “I’m excited to share the footage, because I think you’ll have a better idea of what it was like...I love being able to share my experiences with nature with other people. Because I want them to feel the same things that I’m feeling.” Recall that Miriam enjoyed going outside, as well as being able to learn about the interactions of processes that occur with animals, plants and the environment. By sharing her experiences and knowledge in nature, she wanted others to feel connected to nature. In her intentions, the film will be a medium where viewers could experience the interconnectedness of the universe.

In fact, Miriam stated that sharing her love for nature is a major motivation for making the film. By showing her film to others, she hoped to make her experience with nature more public. She said, “...feedback is important especially when you make something creative when you can show it to other people and get feedback and re-watch it and that's why I think is so cool about the video is that whenever I made a video in the past I always wanted to go back and re-watch it you know? And I feel like it’s something that you keep wanting to go back to...” Miriam stated that only a few people have had the opportunity to have the same experience as her, so an other’s response to her experience may play a significant role. By sharing it with another person, not only will she be able to have her experience acknowledged by another person, but it may also affect others in similar ways that nature affected Miriam.

The film. Titled “Here and There,” Miriam’s film lasts 5 minutes and 30 seconds. In addition to footages from Yellowstone, Miriam included footages she took at her local University. In the beginning of the film, Miriam is walking in the snow and only her feet are visible. With the first shot, the music also starts (The song is “No Way” by The Naked and Famous.) At this point, Miriam is in a field filled with snow, with other people walking with her. We then see fast cuts of the airport, the airplane, and then a shot from inside the car. The location then moves to footages from Yellowstone National Park, including a shot of a river with snow on the ground. The music speeds up, and we see a view from a snowmobile in a park. Shots alternate between the angle from the skier and the snowmobile, with the first verse of the song ending in the background.

As the second verse starts, Miriam is walking on the snow again. The scene cuts to Yellowstone with skiers riding on chairlifts, followed by a quick shot of people skiing, and then to a shot of the river. Bison are walking in the snow up close to the camera. The music speeds up again, at which point we see a shot of a mountainous area and a river, all covered in snow. Steam, coming from the ground, goes up in the air. Afterwards, we see quick cuts of bison walking in the park, and then a close-up shot of a young man on a snowmobile covered in skiwear. (Miriam later explained that this was her brother.) Behind, an older man also in a snow gear is taking a picture of the park (Miriam's father).

After some more shots from the Yellowstone National Park, the music slows down again. Miriam is walking again, but this time there is no longer snow on the ground. The camera faces upwards, making it visible that Miriam is walking at a university campus. As the film ends, the song ends as well. The camera ascends higher to the point where the viewers can see the trees that surround Miriam.

Second interview. The second interview took place in a private room of a library in Miriam's hometown. We met for the interview after the semester had ended, and she had returned home. During the second interview, she discussed how the task of film-making required her to watch the footage repeatedly, reminding her of the profound experience she had in Yellowstone national park. Echoing her comments in the first interview, Miriam was excited to show her film to others, so that others could notice the wonders of nature and become more appreciative of them. During the interview, I noticed the theme of Miriam's human-human relationships, and how they connect to her nature-human relationships. Miriam's enthusiasm was present from the beginning and I did not need to prompt her to start talking about the film:

...For [fish in the water] to be flowing through the winter is what allows [animals in the park] to stay alive and what allows any animals to stay alive in the world so that's why I wanted to focus in the park. And that was one of the highlights of the park was seeing all the geothermal features, because there are vast flats of hydrothermal vents, and bacteria field with their real bright colors of water, and the waters over 200 degrees, but its negative 20 degrees outside, so it's amazing that, it was another example of how I felt nature was so much more powerful than I was.

Miriam's thoughts behind her decision to include these natural features matched her statement in the first interview that she did not have one favorite being in nature but liked nature as an interconnected network of relationships. In her film, she needed to capture the different components of the ecological system at Yellowstone to represent the inner workings of nature. In addition, Miriam decided to prominently feature her family members in the film. She stated,

[My family] was a really important part of my experience, and I didn't want to completely exclude them. And I knew that the purpose of the project was to tie in how something in nature, or not human, affected my feelings towards the world, but I thought it was almost impossible to exclude human influence. Because they were a really big part of my experience and I think that had I been there alone, I would've gotten a completely different experience compared to if I went with them.

Miriam's decision to include her family members reflected her statement in the first interview that her relationship with nature is connected to her human relationships. Miriam's theme in the film also was reminiscent with the EPCP theme that reverence for other human beings could lead to reverence for transpersonal relationships (Adame & Leitner, 2011).

I then asked whether the film-making experience changed her relationship with nature. She replied,

I think that it did, it was heightened by being able to look back on it, to reflect on it because whenever I am on campus, and thinking about the video, I think about Yellowstone, so now I automatically connect those two in my mind now, because I've seen it visually paired and I think that a lot of times I get stuck not thinking about it, but when you have to make a video about it, you're forced to think about it, and you're forced to appreciate it. It's not a bad "forced", it's a good "forced."

By pairing two different experiences, Miriam could find one common "nature" between two different places, so that whenever she sees nature in one place, she has access to think about nature in another place. She spoke more about the reminder function of the film in the following excerpt:

...Automatically, I'm going to remember those experiences more, because in making the video, I had to replay some clips 10 times, 15 times so they're ingrained in my brain now and I can automatically go to it in my brain and remember and think about it. If I hadn't made the video and hadn't re-seen that footage, I would've never had that, and I would forget some of the experiences that I had. And I wouldn't be thinking about...like now when I step outside, and I look around, I think, "oh that would be cool in the video" you know? I'm always thinking about it, because I made a video.

Miriam stated that her way of construing nature changed through her film-making, as she started to construe her natural surroundings in the framework of making a film. As she became more perceptive of her natural surroundings through film-making, Miriam experienced increased attentiveness, consistent with Kaplan's (1995) Attention Restoration Theory (ART) that exposure to nature-related media could lead to enhancing one's general attentiveness. ART researchers found an increase in people's ability to focus when they interact with natural beings and nature-related media (Berto, 2005; Hartig, Korpela, Evans, & Garling, 1997). Miriam seemed to have enhanced her appreciation of nature by her increased attentiveness. In addition, she became more creative as she started thinking about what makes good cinematography. In fact, she stated that she hopes others would also become aware of their surroundings by watching the film. She stated:

So this video is to be like "hey look up every once in a while and see what's around you and appreciate it", and I have to remind myself to do that too, because a lot of the time I'm looking at my feet, I'm looking down and so that's why I really wanted to start off with [a shot of feet walking on the ground], because that's what a most people are doing and I get stuck doing, and going on a trip forces me to look up, and forces me to look around and enjoy it, and so then when I came back to campus when I'm looking down at my feet I think to look up more and I think to look around, to really experience it

Miriam stated during her first interview that she would like to inspire people to care for nature using a creative medium, showing her transpersonal responsibility for nature. Based on her statement above, her objective seemed to remain the same as she

engaged with the film project. She continued, “I feel like a lot of people on campus don’t take the time to look around and see how pretty it is, and so when all of a sudden it slowed down in the video and music, then people on campus can be like ‘wow that’s really cool and I should take a minute to stop and smell the roses’ because it really is an amazing place.” As Miriam shared her intentions for how her audience could feel from the film, I realized that Miriam intended for viewers to assume her perspective as their own. As such, she stated, “It was kind of fun to be able to share something that you made with other people so overall I thought it was a good experience.” Specifically, she told me that she shared it with her friends at college.

In the excerpt below, she reflects on her screening experience:

I think they understood me more and my experiences because a lot of [my friends] knew that I went on a trip like this, but they didn’t know that I had experienced those things, and been that close to the bison, and then done all that with my family so I was able to share a piece of myself through the video that I wouldn’t have been able just by explaining it...so to be able to have video footage of my experiences and share it with them is rewarding because it’s like “ohh they know, they kind of like know what I’ve done and what I’ve seen and how I think” so being able to share it through the video I feel like is better than having a conversation

As she stated that her friends got to know how she thinks through watching her video, she implied that her internal process is accessible through the film medium. Miriam’s film was a piece of her past that showed the viewers her constructions of nature. Miriam also shared her hopes to show her film to her family: “I’m planning on sharing it with family now that I’m back home. I haven’t yet, but I know that they will like seeing it a lot...they were the ones in the video. And I think that since they shared their experience with me, they get a lot more out of it than just my friends watching it.” From the first interview, I found that love for nature runs deep in her family. As such, I expect watching the video together will be another validation for her experience, bringing the family close together through their love of nature. As they strengthen their bonds, they will remind themselves the crucial role nature played in their relationship, deepening their nature-human relationship as a result.

Answers to my research questions. My research questions in this study were whether participants could have ROLE relationships with nature and whether they can reexamine and deepen their relationships with nature through the film-making process. I gathered evidence that Miriam was in fact construing nature's processes as discussed her experience at Yellowstone National Park and felt the inner workings ("the natural forces that shaped that part") of the ecology therein. She also discussed how her experiences at Yellowstone were profound, suggesting that her relationship with nature is impactful. Her description of her nature-human relationship bore some resemblances to ROLE relationship in her life, as she suggested awareness of the processes in nature. However, she did not mention how nature could construe her processes. Given the lack of mutual intimacy, I could not apply ROLE relationships to describe Miriam's nature-human relationship.

While Miriam did not discuss how she believes nature construes her processes, she discussed how her relationship changed due to film-making. Miriam made statements that she now looks at her natural surroundings to see how it would look in a film, as well as that she wants to spend more time to "stop and smell the roses." I believe the act of film-making was helpful for reflecting on her relationship with nature, as she stated that her nature-human relationship was "heightened by being able to look back on [her experience at Yellowstone], to reflect on it." Furthermore, consistent with ART theory, Miriam's focused efforts on art-making facilitated her awareness of the natural processes around her. Her awareness of natural processes enhanced and further consolidated her understanding of nature as an interconnected system, rather than a singular being. Miriam's relationship with nature changed in several ways. First, her awareness of nature was enhanced through repeatedly watching the footages. By viewing the footage "10 times, 15 times," she reminded herself of the natural phenomena she saw and validated her own constructions about nature. As a result, she became more familiar with the natural forces that run through the interconnected ecology of Yellowstone National Park.

In addition, by editing different footages together, Miriam could connect different places so that she became more aware of the different aspects of nature in universe. Film editing is a cut-and-paste process in which one can connect disparate pieces. By combining different footages, one can arrive at a holistic picture of the subject matter. In

Miriam's case, she could examine her relationship with nature at large by combining her Yellowstone experience with the footage at her college. If she only had footage from Yellowstone alone, the film would have been just a documentation of her trip. In other words, through the medium of film, she could consolidate her constructions of individual natural areas into a global construct of nature. With her film as the summative construct of nature, she could enhance her awareness of nature and deepen her relationship with earth's natural network.

Miriam's relationships with human beings changed as well. Miriam stated that her friends know her better by understanding her perspective through watching her film. She also stated that she had substantial relationships with her family during the first interview and hoped to enjoy their memories together by watching the film together. I believe that Miriam's human relationships deepened, because the film was a genuine reflection of Miriam's constructions about nature. Her friends and family could understand Miriam further, because Miriam gave them access to her deeper constructions through the film.

Her relationships with other humans are relevant to the deepening of her nature-human relationship for two reasons. First, as Miriam conceptualized nature to be an all-encompassing system, her human relationships are a part of the larger interconnected network of nature. Her deepening of her human relationships is a facet of her relationships with nature becoming more intimate. Second, one may recall Miriam's environmentalism, that she hoped to spread wonders of nature to others through film. As she deepened her relationships with other human beings, she worked toward the goal of teaching others about the wonders of nature, thereby taking steps towards creating a better future for non-human beings in nature. Miriam naturally arrived at the method of progressing her environmentalist goals by spreading her love of nature, because it was through her human relationships that she grew in her love of nature.

Alex

About Alex. Alex is a 26 year-old white male-identified student at a University in central Ohio. As I passed around the sign-up sheet in his class, Alex wrote his name and e-mail. Alex struck me as a quiet person, as he silently nodded when I thanked him for his interest in my study. During the interviews, Alex initially gave me short answers, confirming my impressions. As shown later in the interviews, Alex described himself as

an “introvert” who tends to keep a distance from others. He added that he often felt different from others, most notably people with whom he lived. He stated that he felt uncomfortable living with his religious parents during his childhood, as well as his extraverted roommates during college. Listening to his discomfort with others, I could empathize with Alex who struggled with human relationships.

As we spent more time getting to know each other, I came to know Alex as a deep and sophisticated person. Alex spoke about his relationship with nature in rich and thoughtful ways. I felt particularly connected to Alex, as we talked about his philosophical explorations. He disclosed that he had a nihilistic worldview for a brief period in his adulthood, but eventually came to peace with it. I learned that nature took a special place in his heart, as he found his favorite walking trails around the time that he was coming out of his nihilistic phase. As I listened to his life events and worldviews, Alex grew on me as a genuine person who has a quiet but sincere way of facing struggles in life.

First interview. In this interview, Alex discussed his favorite nature activity – taking a walk on the trails behind his University. Alex specifically explained how he enjoyed looking at the graffiti at the end of his walks. He felt like he is witnessing different graffiti artists communicate with each other in nature. Alex also discussed not having an extensive history of appreciating nature. He disclosed that he has an introverted personality and did not get along with people close to him. He disclosed feeling miserable and nihilistic, which recently changed as he found nature.

When I asked Alex about his ideas for his film, he talked about his weekly trips to the nature trails. He stated that the natural areas, including the streams that run along these trails, are his “favorite nature place” in his neighborhood. He stated that there is a spot that he particularly likes: “there’s this bridge that has train tracks over it, and there’s a bunch of graffiti in the tunnel.” He explained why he likes looking at these graffiti: “Yeah, I feel like [the graffiti artists] make a connection with the place by participating in something, leaving their mark.” I believed that Alex too was “participating in something,” as he bore witness to the symbols that the graffiti artists left on his favorite place. Alex later described looking at the graffiti as a “collective” experience. He stated, “I guess because they are all going there and contributing and connecting with the same

space. It's not about one person, it's about the group of people that interact, even if they don't necessarily interact at the same time, they could interact at different times, by just leaving an image." By finding the place, seeing the many artists' graffiti, and returning to the place on a weekly basis, the trails and the graffiti have become a part of his routine. In this way, he was making a connection with the place as well. Although Alex was not drawing graffiti himself, he joined the graffiti artists in their journey.

Alex seemed to appreciate these graffiti as ecological art. Artist Heta Kauppinen (1990) has stated that ecological artists make art in the environment to communicate about themselves to the world. As Alex stated that his walk involved "the group of people that interact," he was witnessing the communication between the graffiti artists. While the graffiti artists probably had no knowledge the effect they had on Alex, they influenced Alex through their art. As one artist paints graffiti at one point in time, another artist would respond to the first artist at another point in time. Alex would come along at another point in time, witnessing the communication between the two artists. These individuals, while they may not know each other, cross paths over time. As Leitner (2010) stated that even the most seemingly disconnected things can influence each other, Alex saw graffiti paintings and saw that the artists communicated with each other.

As he was thinking about filming the graffiti for his nature film, I wondered about how Alex interpreted the relationship between the graffiti and nature. I asked:

Aki: Is there a meaning to the fact that these graffiti are found out in nature?

Alex: I think there is. Sort of like sharing even more of these experiences with those people. Because it's not just like a wall uptown, everyone goes there, just happens to spray on it. They had to go out of their way to get there.

Aki: And it's that going out of their way [that is meaningful].

Alex: Yeah like going out of their way. And maybe they were going there to just find the bridge, but they were also experiencing the same sort of things that I was experiencing

Aki: And those experiences are...?

Alex: Just enjoying the beauty of nature, and relaxing and getting away from towns. Bureaucracy and capitalism, and that sort of stuff

Alex's relationship with the graffiti artists was based on his belief that he shared experiences with them on the trails in nature. Alex was sharing a unique experience with the graffiti artists, in that they all serendipitously discovered a shared destination. I also heard a theme of escape, as he discussed distancing himself from "bureaucracy and capitalism."

I asked Alex about the history of his relationship with nature. Alex replied that his interactions with nature had increased over the years. He stated that he lived in the same town all his life. His university is in the same town as well, so he did not need to move out of town to attend college. When I asked if he had any relationship with nature as a child, he said, "Sort of. Not like nature per se, but there was a sort of a small forest behind our house, and then I would be back there with friends. And in the trees and stuff. But I feel like it's not really like, you're not really in nature unless you're like connecting with it in some way." With the last sentence, Alex showed that he has a measure of nature's significance to him, as he pointed out that he needs some level of participation ("connecting with it") to be "in nature." Back in his childhood, nature was a playground that was nearby his house, but he was not engaging with nature at the level he is now.

Alex mentioned that he encountered the nature trails before, stating, "I've been there before in high school, with my girlfriend in high school, and we've walked the dogs back then, so that's when I first discovered the area but then I just forgot about it for a while." Alex's experience in nature did not have a lasting impact, as I believe he still was not *participating* in nature. His past experiences with nature, being forgettable, contrasted with the deeper level of meaning that nature has for him now.

I especially noticed the progression of his appreciation for nature when we discussed whether his hometown was a part of nature:

Alex: Recently I've been thinking about like there are like couple of ways to think about [this college town]. To think like a small town with some nature areas around it or is it like us versus the forest with some buildings in it.

Aki: That's really interesting, which one do you think it is, or what do you think it is?

Alex: I think it really depends. You can pick either one at any given point, depending on what you are focusing on. If you are looking at the squirrels, or if you're not looking at the squirrels.

Aki: Gotcha, if you look at the squirrels, it's more like these sets of buildings and this forest.

Alex: Yeah.

Aki: I'm thinking of what it's like right now, as opposed to how you were before. Do you feel like it's more of this forest, do you feel like it's more of a town...has it changed over the years?

Alex: Yeah, I think it's my awareness of the value of nature, and wildlife, and animals that are not humans that has increased. I think it's more of a forest than a town.

Alex pointed out that his awareness of nature played a role in the perception of his surroundings, implying that nature has assumed a bigger role in his life than before. The more aware he became of his natural surroundings, the more he realized that nature was abundant around him. As his nature-awareness grew, his perspective on his hometown changed. Alex's awareness played a key role in how his hometown changed from being a "small town with some nature areas" to "the forest with some buildings in it." The two labels differ in the prominence of nature. In the former "small town" label, he minimizes nature as he describes it as "some nature areas." In the "us versus the forest" label, nature is more dominant as human constructions are minimized as "some buildings."

Alex spoke more about his change in perspective. Alex stated that the year prior to the interview was the year in which his relationship with nature rapidly grew. He stated:

Alex: [Going out in nature] wasn't something I did before. I've been mostly very solitary, and staying in my house, or on campus and not really exploring nature, or not really thinking of myself as a part of nature. But last year, sort of...discovered nature, and how much it's very beautiful and just like also a good way to get away from people. Which could be a lot sometimes.

Aki: A lot?

Alex: Just people could be a lot sometimes
Aki: A lot of?
Alex: I'm very introverted, so a lot of stress involved with people sometimes.
Aki: Like socializing or just being around people, talking?
Alex: All of that. It can be stressful.

The theme of escape became more prominent, as Alex shared more about "getting away" from human interactions. Nature had a pivotal function in his reducing problems with other human beings. His statement resembled previous comments that he goes on nature walks to get away from "bureaucracy and capitalism," as they both concern how he sought nature as an escape when Alex became tired of human interactions. Alex could feel affirmed when he was away from human infrastructures.

Alex shared more about the stress that comes from interacting with the people in his life.

Aki: You described yourself as an introvert, and there was this whole thing about being with people that stresses you out.
Alex: Yeah, especially the people that I live with, they're not introverts and they're just sort of frustrating sometimes...
Aki: Are these people your friends?
Alex: So, when I turned 18, I moved out of my parents' house, and I moved in with my brother and his friend. And I lived with my brother and his friend for like 9 years now, or 8 and a half years. But my brother moved out last year, and then we have 2 other people who are like his friends' friends and I sort of haven't gotten the chance to leave.
Aki: And you wanted to.
Alex: And I want to leave. I mean that's going to happen anyway.
Aki: Ok, it's not this hopeless situation of...
Alex: No, it's not. It's just frustrating sometimes. They just drink all the time, they talk a lot, they take up space in the middle of the house.

Alex's living situation seems to have been increasingly difficult for him over the years. Alex's discomfort with his housemates added to the significance of nature's

function as an escape. Through the trails, he could distance himself from the frustrations from his human abode, while feeling connected to nature and the graffiti.

Alex disclosed more about his inner state, providing more context for the significance for the role of nature, as he stated:

Alex: So, like the first 25-ish years of my life, I was very nihilistic, like not really believing in any value, and sort of like everything's basically the same, but then I sort of identified that as like "ok, this is nihilism, and that's what it is." And I started looking into what other people thought about it, and I guess other people sort of have solutions to the problem, and they have ways of thinking about it that maybe you can actually value things.

Aki: Did you see it as a problem?

Alex: I did, because it was sort of miserable, I honestly didn't care about anything. I was in [college] for 9 years. Didn't really care about anything but last year, I cared about things, like a lot.

Aki: Was there a triggering event?

Alex: I don't really think so; I think it was sort of a steady rejection. Are you familiar with Camus?

Aki: No.

Alex: I basically read everything that he wrote. And like really enjoyed it and like all of that makes a whole lot of sense

Aki: In problematizing nihilism?

Alex: Sort of rejecting it, getting past it, like recognizing that there is no meaning, but you haven't killed yourself, so maybe get on with it. Use that as a starting place, and then go on from there.

Alex was relieved to find the label of nihilism for his belief system. He could recognize it, research the topic and read books that resonated with him. In this way, nihilism became a "starting place" for his self-exploration. Given his earlier statements, Alex's nihilism also sounded to me as a retreat from humanity. Adame and Leitner (2011) discussed how one may retreat from relationships when one experiences invalidation from others, as Alex seemed to have when he lived with his housemates. I

wondered whether finding nature helped him find value in life, thereby overcoming his nihilism. I asked:

Aki: Do you think rediscovering nature – that was a result of you rejecting that nihilism, or do you think that was an active force in getting you out?

Alex: I think they were happening at the same time. Beginning a better appreciation for nature, and earth and all that, it sort of happened at the same time

Alex did not affirm that nature had an active role in alleviating his nihilism. However, as he stated that rejecting nihilism and rediscovering nature “happened at the same time,” nature filled the void that his defenses against human interactions left in him. In this way, nature became very important to Alex.

The film. Titled, “Nature Thingy,” Alex’s film lasts 4 minutes and 4 seconds. Alex’s film has a linear structure with a first-person perspective, in which the camera moves through the natural trails behind his University and observes rivers and trees. The song “Small Blue Thing” by Suzanne Vega starts at the beginning of the film. The film is essentially a music video in which one song plays during the entirety of the film without voice-over narration. Alex, holding the camera, walks on a trail in the woods, surrounded by purple flowers and leaves. He goes across a bridge over a small creek. We see the camera move across the bridge, eventually zooming in closer to the water. We go through a series of footages with close shots of the creek where we see little fish swimming around. In these shots, the water surface is glimmering with sunlight. We see another series of shots with a smaller creek in broad daylight where there are more rocks than water.

At the end of the film, we see a footage of a tunnel with water running underneath, and colorful graffiti are painted on the wall. We see the camera move closer to the walls and pans across, so that we get a closer look at the many graffiti. We hear the song stop playing after the shot with graffiti. The film ends with a shot of the flowers shown in the beginning.

Second interview. In the interview, Alex first expressed disappointment at the result of his film, stating that he did not feel like he could capture the authentic experience of interacting with nature. However, Alex realized the importance of

authenticity in his relationship with nature through making the film, as he noticed that he can only experience the true feeling of his walks by engaging in the walks itself. As this project was his first time using an art form to represent his experiences, he also stated that he found new ways of expressing himself. Finally, Alex reported that he found nature to be his “home” through his film-making experience. He elaborated on his frustrations of growing up in a home where he felt alienated from others.

Alex stated that the film is a straightforward depiction of his routine walks on the nature trail. Alex went on to state that he initially thought to include voice-over narration, but he eventually decided not to do it. He stated that the voice-over would be unnecessary to the purpose of this film: “I think sharing the journey and the graffiti and experience, and the reflection upon the experience wasn’t so important.” By “reflection upon the experience” he referred to the voice-over narration, which is separate from his actual walks in the trail. Alex did not want to be a commentator for the viewers’ experience of the nature trail. He intended the film to be a virtual reality tour of the nature trails that the viewers must experience the walk for themselves.

Alex shared initial impressions of his film-making experience: “I really enjoyed the process of filming, like going out and really looking at everything more closely. But once I went and looked at the footage that I got, I was sort of disappointed, it wasn’t what I saw. I don’t know if that’s a limitation of me as a filmer.” I felt as though Alex was describing an attempt to bring back his experience to the screen. As he said that the footage was not “what [he] saw” in the real walk, I noticed a theme of loss in the statement. Alex noted the discrepancy between his immediate experience and what he captured in his film. Alex elaborated on the difficulties:

Aki: What do you think it was that was different between the filmed one and your raw experience?

Alex: I think a lot of it was not experiencing everything, you just see and hear stuff, and I would watch it without listening to it, and there are extraneous noises that I didn’t want to put on the film. And it may be just because I focused on the wrong things with the camera, because it was hard to look and record at the same time and record the things that you were looking at.

Alex did not enjoy the film-making experience as much as the actual walk itself, as the filming distracted from his interacting with nature. He now had a task to complete, rather than a simple escape from human interaction. Alex's experience was different from Miriam who enjoyed how the film-making experience helped her focus on her natural surroundings. Perhaps one difference was that Alex intended to capture his experience in film, whereas Miriam used pre-recorded footages from her family trip. Alex's ideas about what he wanted and "didn't want to put on the film" may have distracted him from enjoying nature.

Alex also stated that there were physical differences between his regular walks and shooting. He stated, "there was one point when I had my normal bag, and I had the camera, and it was too many bags. So, I would lean over and there would be too many bags, and it would be restrictive having all this equipment with me." Such physical demands added to the difficulties in experiencing authentic interactions with nature. Still, Alex enjoyed parts of the film-making experience:

Alex: I really liked the filming aspect, I liked putting it together a little bit less, because it wasn't a seeing type thing, but filming it and going out there and looking at everything more closely and appreciating things I hadn't appreciated before.

Alex's statement that the filming involved "going out there and looking at everything more closely" reminded me of a common theme in making art, that is, when you are trying to make art in a particular place with particular materials, you become more familiar with the aesthetics of the materials and the environment. As a result, you become more attentive to the tools you used to make the art. Alex pointed out an aspect of Attention Restoration Theory (ART) in his comparison between the production and postproduction processes. Sewall (1991) discussed, in ART, as one realizes the beauty in nature, one becomes more careful about registering the details, and hence become more attentive in the process. Likewise, the distractions of filming notwithstanding, Alex paid careful attention towards his natural surroundings so that he could find what would be good to film. Alex also brought up the theme of authenticity as he spoke about the impact that film-making had:

Alex: I think it made me appreciate me the authenticity of nature a little bit more

Aki: Authenticity? What do you mean by that?

Alex: Just like actually being out there and experiencing it for yourself instead of what someone has captured, which is kind of ironic thing, because you are going out there and capturing. But it made me appreciate that we can't get the whole thing.

I interpreted the “whole thing” to mean the details and the embodied experience of walking through the trail. Alex expanded on the ART-related observation he made earlier, as he pointed out the difference between interactions with a natural being and nature-related media. The subjects of the sentence vary between the phrases “experiencing it for yourself” and “what someone has...,” illustrating a possible limitation in using a film to live the experience captured in the film; when the viewer cannot feel immersed in the film, the film’s perspective becomes foreign to the viewer. In contrast to Miriam who felt like she could re-live her family trip captured in film, perhaps Alex’s expectation for authenticity removed him from identifying with his own film. While he did not capture an authentic account of his walks in the film, he learned from his film-making experience that only in the immediate contact with nature he can enjoy the benefits that come from it. Alex learned that he is not able to replicate the experiential details and realized the value of his walks unmediated by filming tasks.

In addition, Alex stated he had more articulate thoughts about his relationship with nature by engaging in the film project. He stated, “I think my ideas about nature before were a little bit more abstract and theoretical, and now it’s more like, ‘this is actually what I appreciate, and here’s why I appreciate, and I appreciate the rain hitting the water, because of this’ and it’s like a guttural feeling.” Alex seemed able to conceptualize and verbalize his relationship with nature in different ways, as his ideas changed from being “abstract” to “guttural.” He also stated, “I guess I never thought of myself as an artist in any shape or form, so being able to find something that I really liked and put it together, and to be able to be shared, instead of having to drag someone out there, like actually being able to share it was nice.” Like Miriam, Alex brings up the theme of sharing in his statement. For Alex, sharing his experience is especially significant, because “sharing with others” stands in contrast to his usual tendency to “get away” from human interactions. His relationship with nature was deep enough that he

could grow further and challenge himself to find new creative ways to communicate his experiences to others.

Alex also reached a new understanding of what nature meant to him, as he stated, “I think during the process of making the film, and during the shooting, and thinking about nature, I came to think of it as a home that I never really had. My home growing up was ‘meh.’ My home for the last 8 years, has been pretty ‘blech,’ like I didn’t feel free at home. So, going out in nature is sort of the place I can be myself...” During the first interview, Alex stated that he grew up in his family’s house until he left for college, at which point he started living with people with whom he did not feel comfortable. He stated that nature was an escape to get away from frustrations of interacting with people. In this interview, he expands upon the notion of nature being an “escape” with the new definition of nature as his “home.” Through the film project, he realized the extent to which he feels “free” and “[him]self” in nature. The act of going out in nature is no longer a mere escape from his daily frustration, it has become a homecoming where he can finally feel comfortable being his authentic self. Alex’s new construction of nature as a “home” further confirmed that nature provided a safe relationship that he could not elsewhere.

Alex elaborated on his experience growing up in a home that never felt familiar:

Alex: The house I lived in was always fairly messy, and a little dilapidated and very dark, and I never felt that I could invite friends over to my house, it was always sort of “No, why would you [invite them], they don’t want to experience this.” So, I felt always sort of alienated in that way

Aki: Because your friends wouldn’t come to the house?

Alex: Right, it felt like that was the social experience that I didn’t ever get to have. I was also in homeschool for 3 years, so that screwed everything up too. And my parents were very religious when I was growing up, and they’re still very religious, but it doesn’t affect me as much, now that I’m moved up, so just being in that house for 18 years really sucked, sort of in the same way that being in a house of extraverts really sucked, but for different reasons

Alex's statement spoke to his frustrations with his companions that occupied his past homes. With such statements, he illuminated the distance in his relationship between himself and others who felt different from him. In contrast to his "house of extraverts," Alex felt comfortable in nature. Furthermore, unlike his previous homes, Alex was happy to share the space with others in nature.

I also noticed a similarity between his hesitation in inviting others to his home, and his purpose in making this film:

Aki: You mentioned you weren't able to invite friends, which is an interesting contrast with the purpose of your film, to kind of invite people, to share the experience.

Alex: Yes, I think that is pretty important. You can invite whoever you want in nature. It's just there. It's just nature.

Alex's relationship with nature may not be a *ROLE* relationship, as he did not indicate that he experiences construal processes of nature during these interviews. His saying "It's just there" gave the impression that nature "just" passively exists for him. Still, Alex found a place in which he could feel truthful to himself while sharing his experiences with others. Again, the theme of invitation and sharing is significant, as he had difficulties inviting people to his home, or sharing his experience with others. Alex affirmed my statement that the purpose of his film was to invite *people* so that he share his experience. He seemed to become less defensive about relating to the world including humans and non-humans.

Answers to my research questions. During these interviews, I wanted to see whether Alex enhanced his awareness and appreciation of his relationship with nature. In doing so, I wanted to evaluate whether Alex could construe nature's processes and believed that nature could construe his constructions. While his nature-human relationship deepened, I could not conclude that he has a *ROLE* relationship with nature. Alex showed that his own construal processes about nature changed, but he did not seem to show an understanding about nature's construal processes. In the end of the second interview, he stated, "You can invite whoever you want in nature. It's just there." While I observed that he could understand nature to be a place where he could welcome others, the phrase "It's just there" seemed to imply that nature simply exists without construing.

Over all, he showed that nature means a lot to him, but was limited in speaking about his role in his relationship with nature.

While I could not conclude that he has a ROLE relationship with nature, he increased awareness of his interactions with nature, as evident from his recollections from filming. He was frustrated that his footage did not capture his authentic experiences of his walks; through his frustration, he learned that he could only get the authentic experience by engaging in his walks unmediated by film-making. I believe his “disappointment” in failing to capture everything in film accentuated the importance of his interactions with nature. Alex found out that he could not replace the tangible experience of interacting with nature merely with the exposure to nature through film.

Watching the footages that he took, Alex realized the value of having an authentic encounter with nature. In addition, he realized that he could be his authentic self in nature. Alex stated that, as he developed his conceptualization for the film, he realized that nature is a comfortable home for him. In this new home, Alex felt like himself unlike other places that he has lived. I believe his connection came from the fact that things he found in nature, whether it is the graffiti, trees or the water, appeared inviting to him and did not impose their values and life styles like his human co-habitants had in his past. His encounters in his nature walks offered him an accepting environment to feel like he belonged and invite others, a major feat for a self-described introvert who became “stressed out” in human environments and used to struggle with finding value in life.

As he shared during the first interview, Alex’s nature-human relationship grew out of his disconnect from his human relationships. One may say that Alex engaged with nature at the expense of deepening his bonds with human beings. From this point of view, Alex’s experience may diverge from EPCP’s thesis about optimal functioning in the world that one needs to engage in meaningful and validating human relationships. While this may be true, Alex shared that one purpose of his film is to share his experiences and connect with people. From this statement, while he did not indicate that he has ROLE relationships with human beings, one could say that he became more open to connecting with other humans through his film-making about nature. Perhaps Alex’s growth was most evident in his statement that he liked articulating his thoughts so that he can share

his relationship with others. Film-making could be a catalyst for Alex in sharing his views with others, so that he can engage in ROLE relationships with others in the future.

Furthermore, he learned how to express his relationship through an unfamiliar creative medium. As mentioned, Alex stated that he had never made a film before and was generally unfamiliar with art-making. Although he felt frustrated and disappointed at times, he made valiant efforts in making art about something that he values. As he discussed his foray into art-making, Alex also noted a change in the articulateness of his thoughts, stating his thoughts about nature changed from abstract to guttural, showing that his construal processes changed during his film-making. A change in his construal system implied that the film-making experience deepened Alex's relationship with nature.

Melissa

About Melissa. Melissa is a 58-year old black female-identified film-maker who lives in a small town in Texas. In response to a recruitment announcement I posted online, Melissa expressed her interest and asked for more information. Melissa maintained a warm vibe from the first time that we met. As later shown in the interviews, she stated that she would like to help me by participating in my study. As such, her care and concern were evident during our interactions, as she often asked how my study was going. She also struck me as considerate, as she always updated me about her status of filmmaking throughout her participation.

Melissa never shied away from sharing intimate details of her life and was expressive with her emotions, as she became tearful in both of our interviews. I got the impression that she trusted me with her vulnerabilities. I felt as though Melissa grew close to me with her passions about film-making, as she spoke about how film-making was a tool for her to feel connected with others. Melissa also described herself as a profoundly spiritual person; she spoke prominently of the role of spirituality in her life and how it helped her with her depression. Melissa's love for her husband also was noticeable, as he appeared prominently in the pictures she featured in the film. He also accompanied her to the interviews, giving me the impression that they often participate in activities together. With the vulnerabilities she showed me, along with her love for

others, most notably her husband and God, I came to know Melissa as a passionate and genuine person who works hard to face the struggles in her life.

First interview. In the first interview, Melissa discussed her plans for the subject matter of her film – natural light. She also shared how she initially became a film-maker. In doing so, she disclosed her struggles with depression, and how natural light became a spiritual symbol for God’s love, which helped her fight through her depression.

Melissa stated that sunlight was a natural entity that she thinks about and interacts with the most, being a film-maker who uses low-key lighting. She talked about her motivation for the film project. She stated that looking at light “creates the mood and everyone has different ways of how they deal with certain light coming.” Soon after the first interview started, she disclosed that she also has a personal interest in lighting, stating:

Well basically, I am a depressed person. I wake up depressed, I go to sleep depressed. But what helps me come out of depression is seeing how light hits certain things. I could be driving, and I can see certain things that normal people won’t give it a time of day. So just seeing how light just affects people’s mood and how it hits their skin.

I could tell that the natural light was meaningful, as she said that light is the force that helps her escape an otherwise all-consuming depression. Melissa then stated that she noticed the role of light and wanted to pursue filming when she was young. She stated that she studied music at first but eventually dropped out of school. She followed, “when I came back 10 years later, I still wanted to do something creative, but I didn’t want to do music anymore. So, that’s when it was probably my darkest point getting depressed, that’s when I began to notice me controlling my light coming in, and I thought maybe I’d go into photography and videography.” Essentially, photography and videography are crafts in which interactions with light plays an essential part. From her discovery of light, Melissa was turning a therapeutic tool into a profession. Melissa recounted that she knew that film-making would be her life’s work during her internship.

Where we worked, I worked for the city. So, we did a lot of interviewing. We did things for Easter Seals, so we had to go out and do vignettes, and videotaping people’s stories as they tell what happened to them, and how they got into this

accident and whatever, it intrigued me so much because I'd be getting into looking through the lens, and I could see the details in their face and the pain that they endured and it engulfed me. It engulfed me so much and I thought I got to do this for the rest of my life.

Melissa talked about her filming experience as if it provided better access to the subjects' emotions. In fact, Melissa seemed to have found her purpose when she learned about film's capacity to capture the struggles of others. Hearing Melissa's visceral account of witnessing other people's pain, I remembered her mention of struggling with depression herself. As she could connect with others' pain through the medium of film, I thought that Melissa may be seeking salvation for herself and others.

As we continued the interview, Melissa explained the increasing importance of film-making in her struggle with depression:

Aki: I'm wondering if, in making the decision to get into the career, there was a very personal reason behind...I'm wondering what the personal reason was. Was it to find a way to heal, was it find a way to look at your depression?

Melissa: Well, I think it gave me an avenue to express what I was feeling inside. It became an extension of pain that I was able to get out of my body, and put it into, you know, an object...I start with my pain that is inside of me, and I'm using this tool to get rid of it, and then through the tool, I see myself as growth.

Aki: Wow, okay so tool being the camera, and then when you talk about seeing it, you talk about the photograph or the film. When you see it, what kind of feeling does it invoke in you?

Melissa: It makes me feel like I accomplished something. I grew up with low self-esteem, like I'm not worthy of anything. Seeing that I was able to make something, that's what made me happy.

Notably, Melissa cried as she responded to my questions. As she tearfully stated that film-making led to her happiness, I could tell that the profession played a significant role in a deeply unhappy life. She confirmed as she stated "They were very low points where I did not want to continue life. It was just very difficult. Feeling like I didn't fit in

with anybody...When you don't feel like you fit in with anybody, you have to be able to love yourself, and like yourself, be able to stay with yourself, be by yourself". In her alienated state, Melissa had difficulty connecting with others. In such a context, Melissa gained the capacity to externalize her feelings through film. With film-making, she could have a dialogue with herself about her own growth. As Melissa spoke about "loving yourself," I understood that film-making was one way in which she could experience self-love and find the resilience she needed to survive her pains.

Melissa said that she saw my project as another project that could be therapeutic, stating, "Why don't I use what helps me? So, you know, it could help a recluse person who sits in the house and don't want to be exposed to the outdoors. Maybe they'll open, crack open the blind and let some light to come in, and that's the start to at least being able to feel the outside the world." Melissa was thinking of other human beings who were lost in the darkness. She was hoping to share her remedy with others, using the film for altruistic purposes.

Melissa elaborated on the meaning of natural light, "I look at natural lighting as life. It breathes. It comes alive. Artificial lighting is...it is what it is. It's artificial." Based on her knowledge of photography and videography, she stated that an image shot with natural light cannot be duplicated, unlike an image with artificial lighting. To Melissa, natural lighting had significance in her work as well as for her personal well-being. In addition, I found out that natural light has a spiritual meaning for Melissa during the following exchange:

Melissa: ...light is eternal. Whether there is the same kind of light, or five degrees cooler, it's ongoing, never ending.

Aki: What do you think makes it never-ending

Melissa: Well of course there is the higher being. Whatever religion you are, whatever god or deity or whatever, it's there for all. It crosses all genders, it crosses all cultures, if the power went out all across the world, you're still going to have natural light at the time sun is supposed to come out. To be for all to use.

Based on her beliefs that natural light is eternal ("never-ending") and universal ("whatever religion" "crosses all genders, crosses all cultures"), Melissa believed that

natural light is a force from a “higher being.” As she compared natural light and artificial light again (“if the power went out...”), natural light was a sustaining energy not shared by other sources of light. I found that, for Melissa, natural light and spirituality are connected. In this conceptualization, Melissa is the messenger of a divine force who uses her film to convey a message by a higher being.

Melissa also spoke about how the spirituality contained in natural light affects her mood. She stated:

Spirituality rides on the beam of the light coming through. And it glides it, and it's up to the person or the object to let it enter...So, this spirit is riding on the light and it hits your skin and it's up to you to accept what is given to you at the moment. It's up to you to decide how it's going to make you feel.

Melissa seemed to comment not only on her relationship with natural light, but also the potential relationships others could have with natural light. According to Melissa, natural light was a spiritual force that contacts the person (“it hits your skin”). Each of these contacts is a spiritual encounter. Melissa pointed out the notion of agency, as she stated that it is up to the person to accept the incoming light. Depending on their response, any person could touch divinity. From this statement, I realized that Melissa uses natural light to mediate her relationship with a higher being.

The film. Melissa first made a film 3 minutes and 15 seconds long. I requested that the film be longer, and Melissa added a part in the beginning with a slideshow of photographs and music. She titled the complete film “Breathing Light” and it lasts 5 minutes and 1 second.

Melissa starts her movie with a slideshow of photographs, which includes a picture of Melissa, one of flowers, one of Melissa and her husband together, and another picture of Melissa in the end. As the slideshow continues, we hear instrumental music playing, as well as a voice-over narration that says:

I dream of speckles of rays that penetrate my skin, that flows through me, and the blood within.

Another photograph of flowers appears, and the voiceover continues:

I dream how this energy, how this vast energy that's shared throughout the world makes me feel so different from any other person who receives it. I dream for even

the people who cannot see what it produces still feel the energy that gives them life.

We see a close-up picture of Melissa's smiling face, and the narration continues"

That speckle of ray, the energy that is shared, and the feeling it produces. With love, life and existence, it is light.

A quote appears in white letters against a black background. Melissa reads the quote in her voice over. The quote says,

"There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it."

- Edith Wharton

We see a footage of trees under a blue sky and some texts in the center of the screen, which say, "Breathing." Melissa continues her voice-over:

When I think about how light can create an emotion it makes me think of how wonderful it is to breathe the colors it produces.

On a surface of a lake, the sun is glimmering. Melissa continues the voice-over:

It becomes the nectar of life itself. Each color, each ray of light becomes the energy of each breath we take.

On the surface of the lake, we now see reflections of trees. Melissa says,

It also makes me think about the little things we take for granted.

Melissa walks towards the camera on a paved path, surrounded by trees. She eventually walks so close to the camera that she exits the frame. Melissa continues:

Breathing through color and light helps us whether through conscious or unconsciousness. It gives us the source of our existence. It gives us our connection to God. Or whoever you decide to worship. It is our base, soul and meaning of the world.

Melissa assumes a meditative position, sitting on the ground next to the lake. Next to her, the words "The Naturalness of Light" appear in white font. The voice over continues:

Natural light gives me a sense of helping how I can shape my perception of what I think about myself and why I am placed here on earth.

We see another shot of Melissa meditating from a different angle. She continues,

I fill a void in space so light can reflect off of my wholeness to create a spiritual reflection from the source of life it produces.

As Melissa continues to narrate, we see a close-up shot of flowers with Melissa still visible but out of focus in the background, followed by a shot in which the camera zooms into Melissa's ring on her index finger. Melissa appears in the reflection of the ring. Melissa says in the voiceover

Light is our generated fertilizer that gives us the ability to grow physically and spiritually.

We see a shot of a tree, moving from the bottom to the top. Melissa continues:
Understand your place and the energy you share with light.

On the tree, there are orange, yellow and green leaves. White text appears again, which now says "Emotions." In the voice-over, Melissa says:

When the sun hits my skin, I feel energy not just from what it produces, but a spiritual energy that lets me know everything is going to be alright. Suffering from depression, I often sit inside my house and let the light filter in.

We move to a shot of Melissa walking away from the camera on an unpaved path. She walks between trees that are planted sporadically in the area. Melissa is now inside a house. She is in a room looking out the window through the blinds.

Melissa is outside again walking away from the camera. In the voice-over, she says, "I am in control of the source." We zoom into the trees that Melissa is eventually out of the frame. Melissa continues her narration:

When I get like this, I am telling myself 'I am not ready for the world and what it has to offer for that day.'

We then see a shot in which Melissa is still walking and looking up. She eventually raises her hand towards the sun, at which the point the voice-over goes:

I am in control, so I think.

Sunlight is glimmering on the surface of a water. Melissa says,

When I break out of my depression, full light becomes the natural medicine that I need to cope and feel rejuvenated in self.

In the end, we see a silhouette of trees against the background of a blue sky. Text in white letters appears, and Melissa reads the text:

Don't you know yet? It is your light that lights the Worlds.

-Rumi

Second interview. In the second interview, Melissa discussed her challenges and enjoyments in making the film. She made it clear during the interview that she found it easier when she thought to center her film on her spirituality. I also observed Melissa's altruistic motivation again, as she repeated that natural light helped her and she sought to influence others by introducing natural light.

Melissa reported that she took some time to conceptualize her film. She stated, "At first, it was hard to hone in on exactly what I wanted to do...and before I even thought of the concept of what I was going to shoot, I sat down, thinking of what I was going to say. So, it was hard. So, I just sat there and started thinking about what light means to me, how does it make me feel, and, since I am kind of spiritual, so I thought I would take that route, and the voice-over came easy."

In other words, in the pre-production stage, she was exploring herself. As she delved deeper within herself, she found spirituality at the core of her being. Given she spoke about the divine aspect of natural light in her first interview, the voice-over (that "came easy") is Melissa's spreading the divine message she received from a higher power through natural light.

Melissa stated that she shot most of the movie outside at a park in a nearby town. I asked her about the intentions behind choosing the location. Melissa stated that she intended to emphasize the theme of natural light. She said, "Because just the vastness that light...It succumbs everything. It's everywhere outside. You know, inside you only get filtered whatever. Whether it blinds, cracks, opens doors or something like that. It's limiting the wholeness that it produces. When you're outside, everyone's experiencing it, it's there for everyone to feel and see." As I heard her statement, I observed a common theme in art-making, in which the artist becomes familiar with the environment and materials used in making the art. Melissa had to find a place that could represent the "vastness" of light she wanted to show others. As she stated that light is for "everyone to feel and see," I recalled the universality of light that she mentioned in the first interview, and that light was a divine force emanating from a higher being. In the film, she

mentioned that light connects human beings to God. I understood that filming outside was a way to fully showcase the ubiquity of natural light.

As Melissa distinguished between filming inside and outside, I thought about the shot in her film where she is seen inside, looking out of the window. As I mentioned the shot, she explained, “That was supposed to symbolize my dark place where sometimes it’s hard for me to go outside, to experience the world, but I still want to have that feeling that light produces. That’s why I look through the cracks of the blinds, so it could filter in. For me, it was telling me, it’s all right. It’s all right, come on outside.” As I listened, her outside/inside distinction became a visual symbol for me to interpret the state of her depression. When she is inside, she is in a “dark” interior away from the light outside. As she looks out the window, she wants natural lighting to heal her, but struggles to let the light in. She explained further, “When I’m depressed, and you notice when I’m looking through the blinds, that’s when I’m thinking that, ‘I’m in trouble, I can’t shut you off or turn you off by using my blinds. And that was when I was inside and being inside also to me was a symbolism of being negative inside myself.” Melissa described her hesitation to welcome the light as she hides behind the blinds. However, she also spoke that the natural light still comes in, and that she cannot turn it off. Through the scene, Melissa gave an account of how natural light finds her and gives her hope, even when she is in the dark trying to hide away from any optimism.

As Melissa mentioned in the first interview, spirituality plays a prominent role in her relationship with natural light. She explained further about this spiritual role of natural light, as she stated, “the Bible says in the beginning there was light. And then that’s the whole creation that God gave us, and it starts off from there. And as time evolves, light evolves, and it grows, it’s life. To me it’s like everything. Because when you see light, natural light, it’s God saying, “I gave you life, and life is light.”” For Melissa, natural light was not a soft analogy for life or happiness, but it was the very thing that gave her vitality. From her statement about how natural light was God’s message, I could tell that she could understand the construal processes of natural light.

Melissa also spoke about a new level of awareness of spirituality in her life through this film, as she stated, “It’s just I didn’t realize that I could be that spiritual. I know I’m spiritual, but I didn’t realize that I could bring it out in me. Because, usually if

I write something, it's always depressing...but I thought that what I wrote this time was positive, even though it had mention of depression. I think there was more hope that came out of it." Her comment, "bring it out in me" played a crucial role in her statement above, as it echoed her earlier statement that she could use film to externalize her feelings to others. Film continued to be a medium for her to express herself to the world; with this most recent film, she could express a central part of herself. Furthermore, in the past, she only had a one-dimensional understanding of her spirituality in that she only reflected on her depression. However, through making this film, not only was she able to find her story more hopeful, she could also find that her spirituality could have different dimensions of depression and hope that could co-exist.

Melissa discussed what she liked about making the film, as she stated, "I like doing things for other people. I just enjoy it, and when I saw that you had put a notice that you needed this, and it's for your school, something that you wanted to do in life. I thought: I got to help this person." Melissa's initial source of enjoyment was her altruism for me. Hearing her, I remembered her purpose to help others by showing what helps her through the film. Given Melissa's earlier statements, I also believe that her concern for others is spiritual, in that she was performing a spiritual duty by delivering natural light to others. For Melissa, nature or natural light is an all-encompassing therapeutic agent. Given that she believes natural light to be omnipresent, she believes it will help everyone. She used the film as the medium for the natural light to remind herself and others about the healing effects of divinity. Her relationship with natural light is central to herself, because natural light represents divinity.

Melissa later spoke about whether film-making changed her relationship with natural light. She said, "I think it's about the same. It just gave me the opportunity to bring it out in a piece, in video. Normally I would just have it to myself, but I was able to share what I actually think about every day with someone else. With you, but I think more people will see it. It gave me the opportunity to share what I normally think." Melissa's statement that her relationship is "about the same" sounded contradictory to her previous statement that the film-making increased her awareness of spirituality. However, her follow-up comment about sharing her spirituality with others convinced me that her reflection is consistent, especially with her earlier statement that the film-making brought

out the spirituality in her. When she said that her relationship with nature “is about the same,” she meant that the spirituality of her nature-human relationship is the same, but she also meant that she could reach more people about the healing spiritual force of natural light. Melissa elaborated below:

Aki: What effect do you think sharing this film had on you?

Melissa: (crying) I’m not sure but it’s a good feeling. It’s just a good feeling to me to be able to open up and just share what I have to offer. Whatever it is, if it was good or bad. I just liked to share. Sorry I’m such a cry baby.

Melissa had a cathartic experience through making a movie about her inner demons and the role of natural light. In relational terms, I found that she satisfied her yearning for connection with others, as she felt like she could convey her spirituality to others. Melissa raised the theme of “releasing” her inner demons as she talked about the impact of making the film. She stated:

I could be an introvert...but I could snap and I can be an extravert. And by doing this project, it helped me come out of that introvert stage...I can flip flop back and forth but by doing this project, it gave me hope that I can go do something else...it gives me reassurance, that validation, that I’m ok, I worked with someone I didn’t know. I could go work with someone else too. So, I thank you for this.

Melissa pointed out that the importance of the relationship between the researcher and the participant is a key part of the film-making experience for her. She reported that she gained confidence from the fact that she could work with “someone [she] didn’t know,” and this was a major part of “coming out” of her introversion. Much like the therapist-client relationship, the researcher-participant relationship gave her hope that she could reach others through her spirituality symbolized by natural light. If she could explore deeply within herself and tell her spiritual journey to one person through her film, then she could be hopeful about telling her story to other human beings.

Answers to my research questions. I sought to investigate whether Melissa could become more aware and appreciative of nature due to film-making. I also investigated whether she had a ROLE relationship with nature and if the film-making process deepened it. First, I need to clarify what “nature” meant to Melissa. When Melissa showed interest in my study, she planned to focus on natural light as the subject

matter for the film. With her initial plan, along with her responses during the interviews, I understood that Melissa's construct of nature is not an interconnected network of beings (like Miriam), and she did not share a connection with many constituents of mother nature, such as trees and animals. Rather, her construct of nature was symbolic in that it was a medium that gave her access to God in the form of natural light.

Melissa's nature-human-relationship seemed intimate, but did not involve mutual intimacy required for ROLE relationships. Natural light played a profound role in Melissa's core identity as a spiritual person, as she understood it to come from a higher being. I saw that Melissa could construe the construal process of natural light as a force that could salvage one from her depression, as she said "when you see light, natural light, it's God saying, 'I gave you life, and life is light.'" However, I did not observe that Melissa believed that natural light could feel her own construal processes.

As Melissa made a film about her relationship with natural light, she stated that the film-making brought her spirituality out in her. Based on Melissa's construct of nature, her nature-human relationship is a relationship between Melissa and God through the medium of natural light. As she discussed her struggle with depression, her film is a personal account of finding hope from natural light. Symbolically speaking, by sharing the film, Melissa could come out of the closed interior, gaining more connections to others outside, to nature and to God. In this way, Melissa deepened her relationships with others through her film-making experience.

I believe that Melissa's relationships with nature deepened, given my conceptualization that her constructs of nature, God, and the world are all connected. Buber's (1958) explanation on spirituality is fitting for Melissa's construal process when he stated God is "the eternal thou (you)" (p.77), suggesting that one's relationship with the world (a collection of you's) are intertwined with one's relationship with God (the eternal you). Adame and Leitner (2011) explicated Buber's position that "it is in all our interactions with the world (thus blurring the dichotomy between the sacred and profane) that God exists" (p. 53). In the framework of Buber and EPCP, her constructs of "nature" "God" "world" or just simply "others" can be understood as a constellation of you's. Hence, by sharing her core constructs through this deeply personal film, she had deepened her relationships with all others.

Melissa was like Alex in that she spent much of her life feeling disconnected from others. As she stated that she had difficulty finding her place in the world, it must have been an ordeal to find others to whom she could relate. In this context, I believe the researcher-participant relationship had a crucial role in enabling Melissa to share her core constructs with others. I realized that my role was important especially when she said that her initial motivation for participating was to help me in completing my study. From the very beginning, in her mind, the success of her participation depended on whether I could accept her film. I was the point person for Melissa's participation, as well as the first audience member for her film. As Melissa made the film to share her experience with the world, I was in an important position of being the witness to her experience. In the second interview, Melissa made it clear with her tears that she was in awe that she could share her personal film with me. I realized that I have validated the constructs she shared through her film. As I validated Melissa's innermost feelings, I believe I facilitated Melissa to feel like she could connect more with the world.

Cassy

About Cassy. Cassy is a 24-year old white female-identified graduate student at a University in central Texas. She was new to the area, as she had just moved from another city with her partner, Vanessa, as well as her pet dog, Cody, and cat, Jon. Cassy was enthusiastic and curious about the study from the beginning. She struck me as a warm and friendly person, especially from how she greeted me with a smile in our first encounter. In the first interview, she was open to telling me about her personal background, including her eagerness to deepen relationships with animals and nature at large. She was articulate as she talked about her past experiences, giving me a precise picture of her feelings and thoughts. Cassy was eloquent in her responses and did not hesitate on expanding on a discussion point.

I was struck by the energetic and loving ways in which she talked about her meaningful relationships. She also was expressive when she talked about her loved ones, making it clear that she cherished her relationships with human and non-human companions. I came to like Cassy myself, given her friendly and thoughtful character. It was noticeable during the interviews that she thought deeply about her film-making experience, showing her commitment to her participation in my research project. After

the two interviews, I ran into Cassy once as I worked on this document, and she greeted me while curiously asking me about how my study was coming together, showing that she still cared about my study.

First interview. In the first interview, Cassy discussed her familiarity with art, and her decision to make her pet dog the subject matter in her film. She talked about having her pet dog, and her history of having close relationships with her pets. She also shared how she developed her love of nature, particularly from pivotal experiences where she engaged in conservation efforts. We started the interview by talking about Cassy's familiarity with art, as she stated,

My girlfriend, she's an artist, so she does a lot of personal expression through art. It kind of inspired me to do the same so I started writing poetry and photography just to try new ways of expressing myself...Sometimes I'm able to articulate in ways that I haven't been able to before. Like, hyper-reflecting on it and making it manifest itself in some verbal or visual form. Sometimes I discover something that I didn't even recognize was going inside a heart of mine, but I gave myself a second to breathe and release and express it.

For Cassy, art had an element of surprise, as she explored herself and found an aspect she had not "been able to before." Art was an avenue to reach new heights in self-exploration. I found Cassy's statement to be like EPCP theorists' (Guthrie, 1995; Thomas & Schlutsmeier, 2004) account that some presentational symbolisms might be non-literal. For example, Thomas and Schlutsmeier stated that poetry and visual arts could be common pathways to access experiences that do not translate to the literal. Non-literal, aesthetic ways of self-expression could be the only medium to express such experiences. The non-literal capacity of aesthetic expressions became more important later for Cassy, as she explored her relationships with her beloved animals who, obviously, do not speak or understand human language.

Cassy then said she found art to be useful at a young age. She stated, "...poetry is the main one. And, actually, when I was a little kid, I went through abuse as a child, and I found writing as an avenue to express myself." Cassy did not elaborate on her experience of abuse. However, from her statements, I could tell art had a function of providing a safe space for Cassy to be herself. Hypothetically, if Cassy did not have the artistic tools to

process her experiences, her abuse may have been far more injurious. Cassy reminded me of Melissa who also found solace in art when she struggled with relational injuries.

Cassy stated that her dog, Cody, would be the subject for her film, “Cody has been a great incentive for [Cassy and Vanessa] to go and explore, so I thought that’d be really neat using in the film – my dog and my cat as vehicles of how I explore the natural world.” Much like my film “At home with Kale,” she intended to use her relationship with Cody to represent her relationship with nature. Cassy spoke about the history of having Cody, starting from the time she picked him at the shelter. She stated, “We wanted to go somewhere where we could actually save an animal’s life rather than force a new one into the world. And we wanted an older one that maybe looked like it wouldn’t get adopted so we wanted to be that family that we could take them.” I observed Cassy’s altruism and environmentalism as she stated that she wanted to save a non-human life. Cassy showed me that she could take the animal’s (supposed) perspective and care for its well-being, as she assumed that a dog living in the shelter would want to live with a family eventually. With Cassy’s perspective-taking, I inferred that she was ready to be in a deep relationship with Cody when she adopted him.

Cassy explained how Cody is a “vehicle” for her exploring the natural world. She stated, “Whenever we get a chance, we put him in a car with us, when we go to the store, when Vanessa picks me up from school...and we’ve seen a lot of different parks with him in the city, we’ve taken him to go visit our family in [her hometown], so he’s really an integrated part of our family.” In addition to the fact that she takes Cody to many places, Cassy’s use of “we” (she and Vanessa) helped me understand that Cody was, in fact, a major part of her family’s life. The fact that she takes him to see her parents added to the sense that he is a family member to her.

Cassy also discussed the benefits of having pets in her household in the following statement: “They remind me to relax. Usually when I get home, I spend 30-40 minutes just hanging out with them, petting them, cuddling them, feeding them, walking them, and it’s just relaxing and therapeutic for me, because each of those things help me relax, and calms me down.” Cassy’s interactions with Cody had immediate benefits on her mood, supporting Bao and Schreer’s (2016) study that found that owning a dog is associated with positive outcomes for mental health. She also discussed the long-term

benefits, as she stated, “they remind me to be considerate, because I’m responsible for their wellbeing. So, it reminds me to take care of others and remain considerate and compassionate. It reminds me the importance of being teachers in our roles and have patience in our teaching.” From her responsibilities as a pet-owner, Cassy was learning how to deepen relationships with others.

Furthermore, Cassy told me that Cody has played a significant role in her relationship with Vanessa, explaining that he keeps Vanessa company when Cassy is working. Cody brings Vanessa emotional support when Cassy herself cannot. Cassy stated, “Every now and then when she’s gone I will say to Cody, ‘You know, you really helped mom get through some hard times. So, thank you.’” Cassy, Vanessa, and her pet dog all have relationships with each other, forming a triad of support. When Cassy cannot provide support for Vanessa, Cassy can rely on Cody to support Vanessa. By saying words of gratitude to Cody, Cassy was communicating to Cody with the premise that he can listen to her human words. With the ways Cassy speaks with Cody, Cassy also seems to treat her relationship with Cody as if it is an interpersonal relationship without being bound by their differences in species.

Cassy presented her history of having pets when she stated, “I always had dogs and I always had cats and at one point I had three dogs and two cats... I remember my first dog died so the puppy that they got a day after I was born, it was just so emotional.” Some may choose to grow more distant from animals after experiencing grief. However, knowing Cassy’s current investment in her pets, Cassy construed grief in such a way that she wanted to keep them close. Cassy elaborated, “Now I view my pets more as my kids like I feel like I’m the caretaker for them, whereas when I was growing up, in many ways, the animals felt like caretakers to me and I think it has to do with the fact that my parents were the ones who were feeding them...but I had the experience of having them as friends and watching out for me.” As she grew older, the roles that they played in each other’s lives changed.

Cassy also talked about appreciating nature as separate from her relationship with Cody. When asked about the effects of being out in nature, she stated, “I think majorly two things: one is that calmness, and the other is reflection.” Cassy also spoke about the role that nature plays in her life: “Probably smaller than I would like it to. The main one

is honestly seeing parks as relaxation and recreation so when we go camping, for example, or when we take the dog out, or we have a picnic, that's what I would say a majority of the interaction with nature.” As Cassy shared that the role of nature is “smaller” than she would like, she meant she would like to engage in her nature-human relationship deeper than recreational interactions.

Cassy discussed the history of her relationship with nature, recalling her earlier years, “I never really went camping. My parents never really took me to the park and then came a point in my life when I hit puberty, when I was like I want more from life than this. I want to be healthier, I want to be going outdoors and physical activity and so I took it to my own hands” One can sense Cassy’s eagerness to engage in nature in the paragraph above. While she mentions her health, her desire to engage with nature also sounded existential (“I want more from life than this”). As she mentioned her puberty, I inferred that she had been frustrated about her parents not giving her the opportunity to interact with nature for a considerable amount of time in her pre-pubescent years. Her relationship with nature came from a profound frustration in her human-human relationship with her parents. Cassy’s early years set the stage for having a deep relationship with nature later in her life.

Cassy spoke to me about a pivotal experience in nature. She stated,

Cassy: I spent a month in the state of Washington working on the Chief Joseph Dam, and I was doing the same work of trails and water ways and planting trees and moving species...and spending a month where you have no contact with the outside world and you’re in touch with nature and you’re trying to make her healthier. It was really beautiful and refreshing

Aki: What about it, do you think?

Cassy: I think a lot of it was the pace of life, not having to deal with all the stresses of things like homework and commuting and things of that nature.

Cassy stated that she had realizations about living in a city, saying “I remember coming back and thinking, the striking thought was, it feels weird to sleep inside these walls with manufactured colors, and manufactured lights and it feels so claustrophobic and separate from everything else.” As she expressed her displeasure about the manufactured environment, she implied that she felt happier in a more open environment

(as opposed to a “claustrophobic”) where different beings seemed to be connected (as opposed to “separate from everything else”). As she spent an extended period working outdoors, she noticed that “the trails,” “water ways,” “trees,” “species” and herself were all connected in an open natural space.

After her experience in Washington State, she became more conscious of the environment, and hoped to contribute more to environmental sustainability. “...Feeling like I’m doing something good for nature versus sometimes in your daily life you feel like ‘man. I’m doing something that’s really shitty for nature.’ I’m sure I try my best to conserve water and to recycle but I know in my daily life, everything from driving to this and that, it’s hurting her and it’s making her bleed.” Here Cassy described experiencing a potential for transpersonal reverence from her experiences on the working trip. Her empathy for nature seemed to come from anthropomorphizing nature and empathizing with it. Cassy described hurting nature and feeling “her” pain. In addition, she was thinking of nature having a body that “bleeds.” Cassy was thinking of nature as a tangible being whose well-being Cassy can influence with her actions. As such, I got the sense that she was in an embodied relationship with nature.

The film. Cassy’s film, “Camping with Cody,” lasts 7 minutes and 51 seconds. Given that Cassy shot the film with the camera on Vanessa’s phone, the finished film is in a portrait frame in which the frame is a vertical rectangle, as opposed to the traditional landscape frame in which the frame is a horizontal rectangle. The film does not have any music or sound.

In the beginning, we see Cassy’s pet dog Cody laying on his bed. We get closer to Cody’s face. We then see a room in Cassy’s apartment with Cody and her cat, along with stuffed travel bags that imply someone is preparing to travel. In the next shot, we see a close-up of the cat eating his food. We then see Vanessa interacting with Cody. Afterwards, Cody is seen eating food from a bowl. Next to Cody and his food bowl, the camera also shows a fish oil jar and an empty food bowl for their cat. We see more objects in the house, including a folded-up tent and a boxed-up pet food.

We go outside of the apartment, where Vanessa is walking Cody across a parking lot. She eventually reaches her car and puts the box in the trunk. We eventually see the three of them through the reflection of the window. In the next shot, they have left the

premises as the car is on the road in a traffic jam. Vanessa is drinking water in the driver's seat, and Cody is laying in the backseat.

We then come to a forest. We are at a camping site with foldable chairs on the ground. Vanessa and Cody are standing around the bench. We see Cassy and Vanessa holding a map of a state park. In the next shot, Cassy, while holding the camera, has the leash on Cody and all three of them are walking around the camping site. A montage of people holding Cody follows. In one shot, Cassy is picking up Cody's stool in a bag and holding it in front of the camera. The viewers can see the scenery of the state park, with trees and an open field. In the next shot, a person is making a fire under a grill outside. Cassy and Vanessa are grilling food on top of burning logs. In the next shot, two pairs of feet appear in front of the grill with two kettles, with Cody right by them. In the next shot, Vanessa walks by the river with Cody. The viewers move closer to Cody's face, to the point that the river becomes the background of the face.

In the end, we are back inside the car. Vanessa is in the driver's seat, and Cody lays in the backseat. The group is leaving the national park. We are back inside of their apartment, with their travel equipment on the floor. The dog is lurking in the corner of the apartment. Cassy moves closer and pets the dog.

Second interview. In the second interview, Cassy and I discussed her intentions behind her creative decisions, such as why she decided not to add any sound in the film. We reflected on what she enjoyed about making the film, citing her appreciation for her collaborations with Cody and Vanessa, as well as the challenges that arose during the process. Cassy also responded to my research question directly as she discussed the effects of her film-making experience. In short, she stated that she was reminded of the qualities she values about her relationships with Cody and learned to appreciate her natural surroundings more.

Cassy stated that she wanted her film to be like a set of "snapshots" from her camping trip with her partner and Cody. Hence, the film is a chronological account of Cassy, her partner, and Cody going camping together and then returning home. Furthermore, Cassy stated that Cody is deaf, which led to the decision to cut all sounds from the film. She stated, "We want to add Cody's perspective in...he's still having a blast being Cody even though he can't enjoy any of the audio elements of this experience,

so I guess showing his connections to us doesn't require sound and showcasing our connection to him shouldn't either." Through the film, Cassy was sending a message to the viewers that auditory experiences are not meaningful or necessary in her relationship with Cody. She invited viewers to take Cody's perspective by encouraging them to think critically about the necessity of hearing. I recalled the first interview when Cassy took the perspective of Cody when she picked him up from the animal shelter. I had the impression that Cassy's film represented how in-tune Cassy is with Cody's construal processes.

Cassy stated that she enjoyed making the film: "I think it made me think about the kind of moments or images that I wanted to capture, which sort of makes you inherently reflect on what I am valuing about this camping trip, what I am valuing about the nature around me, what I am valuing about the dog and Vanessa and their relationship." Cassy illuminated the recurrent theme in the results section, namely that the act of thinking about making a film makes you ponder more about the subject matter. Naturally, along with the other participants, she became more mindful about which moments are meaningful to capture, and why she considered them meaningful.

Cassy stated that she enjoyed the sheer opportunity to spend more time in nature, stating, "Just going on a trip – this was our first camping trip with him, like we've taken him to parks before, and sometimes on hours-long hikes, but this was the first time actually spending the night and having the fire and all those things, so I really appreciated how calm he stayed." Although Cassy was describing her camping trip and not the film-making itself, she chose to make her film about her camping trip, hence making the film-making inseparable from her camping experience. Along with other participants, Cassy raised a crucial point in making art in that the process entails interacting with the milieu and materials that one uses to make the art. Cassy and other participants in this study conceptualized their films with familiar parts of nature and became even more intimate with the subject matters in the course while making their films. Cassy became more intimate with Cody, as she spent the night with Cody for the first time, deeply immersed in nature. Art-making requires artists to interact and familiarize themselves with the materials, which is crucial in the context of deepening their relationship.

I asked whether her relationship with nature deepened due to the film-making. Cassy stated, “I don’t know if it’s deepened as a result of the movie itself, but it was hard for me to de-couple the movie-making from the actual camping experiences in some ways, since they were intertwined.” She did not plan the camping trip solely to make a film; rather, her film was a documentation of the camping trip. Her holding the camera and shooting became so embedded in the camping trip itself that one could not be distinguished from another. She added, “I think the filming part of it just gave it, like it was another layer to it, it made the experience even more rich. And it made me even more mindful of the things I was experiencing.” Much like other participants, Cassy became more mindful about the presence of the natural surroundings by shooting the film and examining the subject matter in closer detail.

Cassy also commented on the collaborative nature of the film-making process. She stated that she appreciated her partner’s role as she worked on her film. Cassy recounted how supportive her partner was, as she lent Cassy the filming equipment, and became a subject of the film itself. (Cassy had stated that her own phone became unavailable, given the lack of memory capacity in her phone.) Cassy said that her partner also helped her in the editing of the film. In addition, Vanessa was a moral support as she often made encouraging remarks during the film-making process. Cassy stated,

As you can see in the shots, throughout the whole entire thing she was constantly interacting with Cody, checking on him and then overnight I had very ill-prepared for the freezing weather and...she was just a calming force for both of us babies, and so that was really nice...because at every task, I think I’m a more responsible adult type, but when it comes to those kind of things she’s always the rock for both the dog and I.

Cassy’s enhanced awareness extended to her relationship with her human partner. As she shot and edited the film together with her, Cassy was reminded of and became more appreciative of the crucial role her partner played during the process. I recalled the first interview where she discussed how Cody was an integral part of her relationship with her partner. Here again in the second interview, Cassy discussed how nature-human relationship and human-human relationship could play integral roles for each other.

When I asked if Cassy learned anything about herself from the film-making experience, Cassy stated, “I think I’ve always enjoyed trying to capture moments like the photography for example, or via poetry like trying to explain a moment with words. And so, I really like using the film medium to do the same. And you know images really speak for themselves in a lot of ways. So, that was fun, getting to do something artistic.” Cassy repeated her statement from the first interview that she can express herself through art in ways she cannot in other media. From both statements, Cassy seemed to have found film as a medium where she could deeply express both Cody’s perspective and her own.

Cassy also distinguished between film and poetry, stating, “I felt my role as someone trying to capture something was similar, but [filming] felt more co-creative, because I wasn’t really dictating what was happening. I was really capturing the idea of found art with film. The world is giving you something beautiful already, and you’re trying to capture it, showcase it to others.” Cassy discussed her experiences with poetry and writing in her first interview, but she was new to film-making before this project. Cassy’s comments about the “co-creative” nature of film-making point out the ways film is a conducive art form to deepen a relationship with the subject matter. Especially in Cassy’s experience, she deepened her respect for Vanessa, Cody, and nature through her film-making experience. Comparing poetry versus film, poetry is like creating something out of nothing. She thinks of words in her head and writes poetry with those internally generated words. In contrast, in film-making, she is collaborating with “the world” that already has beauty created.

Cassy also spoke about the changes in her relationship with nature in general:

I think it reminded me to keep my eyes open and look around a bit more. This is kind of a tangent but last week, because of the nature of my school, I’ve been staring at my computer screen so much that my eyes have been watering...I’m so sick and tired of staring at computer screens and killing my eyes...But it kind of ties into the whole idea of look away from work look away from that focus, look away from the duty every now and then to look around you, at the trees, the sky, your dog, your girlfriend, all these beautiful things surrounding and camping is something that isolates you from your work in a very literal and metaphorical

sense, and you just get to be, you're in that space, you can consume all of it with your eyes, your ears and all your senses.

Cassy's statement about "looking around a bit more" was consistent with other participants' statements about becoming more attentive to their surroundings. Her nature-human relationship reached a deeper level because the film-making experience was an opportunity for her to remember nature's benefits especially in contrast to the exhaustion she feels in human-made routines. She felt a liberating sensation to "just get to be" through the sensuous pleasures she gained through interacting with her loved ones in nature.

Cassy also discussed some challenges in making the film. For example, she stated, "I think sometimes there'd be a moment, and then I was really living in the moment, and I'd be like, 'ah, that would have been great to capture!' I was just so consumed by the moment itself as a participant rather than an observer so there were moments like that made it a little difficult." Cassy stated earlier that filming brought "another layer" to her experience in which she became more mindful of her interactions. However, in the comment above, she seemed to be too immersed in the moment that she had difficulty examining her experience. Sometimes the actual experience was so enjoyable that it did not require filming to be mindful. I asked whether film-making distracted her from genuinely enjoying the experience. She stated:

Inherently by filming it, you're disrupting it in some way. Because there were moments when there was a lot of emotions, pulling out a phone to film it would have perhaps disrupted that emotion and changed the way the whole conversation was going once the phone was pulled out. So, yeah, I think it might have changed the dynamics, but I think it would've been a happy distraction because we were lying there wide awake, wishing we could sleep and maybe activity in and of itself would have been therapeutic because we had something to do, and it would have been fun. So, I think it would have changed the nature of what had happened but it might have been like a positive activity

Cassy seemed to state that she found an ideal median in the participant/observer split. Even when filming could intrude upon her experience at first, the intrusion itself

could be a part of the fun camping experience. In this way, one could still make a film as a participant by making filming a part of the holistic experience of camping.

Answers to my research questions. In sum, Cassy's stated that her relationship with nature, as represented by Cody, benefited from the film-making experience as she could express Cody's visions as well as hers and was able to become more mindful about nature along the way. In our first interview, she described nature as central to her identity since childhood. Deprived of going outside, Cassy spent her childhood frustrated and wanting to have a deeper relationship with nature. Since then, she has been fulfilling her wish to deepen her relationship with nature by dedicating herself to her relationship with pets and conservation efforts. Being familiar with art from an early age, she already knew the capacity of art to be a safe medium for her to reflect on her relationships. She also spoke about speaking to Cody as if she is speaking with another human being, suggesting that she is treating her relationship with Cody as an interpersonal relationship.

Cassy discussed several points that suggested her nature-human relationship was intimate. First, Cassy stated that she empathized with Cody's construal processes as she discussed how she thought that a dog who stayed the shelter would want to live with a family eventually. She also frequently anthropomorphized Cody and nature at large frequently, as she stated that she is hurting nature and that it is "bleeding" Cassy's decision to make the film in mute is further evidence for being in tune with Cody's construal processes. However, while I could observe from her statements that she had an important role in the lives of her pets and her nature at large, I did not find evidence from Cassy's statements that Cody and nature could understand her processes, and hence could not conclude that EPCP's ROLE relationship was applicable. She mentioned her talking to Cody that he helped her partner through hard times, but even this comment did not suggest that Cody understand humans' construal processes.

As Cassy was immersed in thoughts about her relationship with Cody, as well as others, the film-making process seems to have facilitated a deepening of relationships with others. Her relationship with Cody deepened as she thought about what to capture in the film and became more aware about what she likes about her relationship with Cody. She stated filming added a layer to her experience in that it made her become more mindful of her relationship with nature. Because of film-making, she was reminded to

enjoy sensual pleasures offered by her interactions with Cody, Vanessa, and their interactions together.

The reason why film-making worked to enhance her relationships may involve Cassy's perception that it is more "found art" rather than a self-generating art form such as poetry. While poetry was effective for Cassy as she survived her childhood abuse, poetry seemed to have been a rather solitary experience, as she kept comparing it to the more interactive, collaborative film-making experience. In contrast, her film-making required her to engage with Cody, the very subject matter of her film. In other words, while poetry could be conducive to having an in-depth meditation about one's constructs, film involves more doing or making active steps towards interacting with your subject matter, facilitating a correspondence that deepens one's relationship.

Furthermore, Cassy spoke about filming adding a "layer" to her experience during camping. I interpreted her statement as saying that she could see herself from a higher ground and become more mindful of her interactions with nature. As she discussed moving back and forth between being the participant and observer of her experiences, I believe that the film-making enabled her to experience her relationship with nature directly, while having a reflective lens to analyze the construal processes of herself and others. As she could enjoy her immediate experience and realize the value of it, her appreciation for her nature-human relationships was enhanced. Her observation that she wants to "look around more" to sensually appreciate the nature around her is evidence that she appreciates the presence of nature and acknowledges its role in her life.

Discussion

In this study, I asked participants to make a film about the natural world. I investigated how they engaged in their relationships with the natural world after their film-making process to see if they could deepen their relationships. I explored whether participants' nature-human relationships were deep enough to warrant that it was a ROLE relationship or whether I needed need to develop an alternative EPCP conceptualization of nature-human relationships.

One major finding was that there were ways that most participants' nature-human relationships resembled ROLE relationships. However, there were ways that these relationships were different from previous conceptualizations of ROLE relationships. For

example, Miriam stated that nature was already central to her identity during her first interview. In addition, she suggested that her nature-human connection is a ROLE relationship during the second interview, as she spoke about gaining a deeper awareness of natural processes and reminding herself to appreciate nature more through the film-making process. Further, Melissa discussed the role of natural light as a vehicle for a divine force in her identity as a spiritual person. Melissa stated that she could express her spiritual connection with nature to others and commented that it was a cathartic experience. By making the movie, she also gained further understanding of nature as a spiritual medium that could affirm her. She also could feel more open and connected with the others, thereby deepening her relationship with the outside world. Cassy had a relationship with nature established prior to making the film, as she spoke about how her pet dog Cody was central to her life; she seemed to have a ROLE relationship with a natural being. One way she expressed her construal of his construing processes was to make a film without sound. She too became more conscious of what she values about her relationship with Cody as she carefully observed Cody during the camping trip where the filming process took place.

Alex and Melissa's nature-human relationships were different from Miriam and Cassy, in that it was unclear what kind of relationships they had with nature before their film-making. For example, Alex's relationship with nature seemed more limited than other participants. During the first interview, Alex described nature in terms of an escape from stressful human-human interactions but did not indicate having a relationship with nature that involved intimate reflections. However, after he made his film, Alex deepened his relationship with nature, exhibiting characteristics necessary but insufficient for ROLE relationships. Alex realized that his actual experience of interaction with nature is irreplaceable as he reflected that his footage did not capture the authenticity of nature. Further, he described nature as a home where he can be himself and that "you can invite whoever you want in nature." His statements showed that he feels authentic and comfortable sharing the space with others. Alex's relationship with nature conforms to some characteristics of ROLE relationship in EPCP terms, as Leitner and Faidley (1995) stated that one could feel safe and authentic in a deep relationship. However, compared to other participants, he did not discuss much about nature's construal processes. Hence, I

could not conclude that his nature-human relationship had become a ROLE relationship. Nonetheless, his new understanding of the role of nature opens possibilities for further growth for his nature-human relationship.

Further, participants reported enhanced awareness of the nature-human relationships due to the film-making experience. By making a film about her experience in Yellowstone park, Miriam became more aware of her relationship with nature as she repeatedly watched the nature that she loved. After the completing the film, she described examining her natural surroundings carefully to see what would look good in a film, showing that her perception of nature became more attentive. In addition, Miriam could piece together nature in different places and seasons, deepening her awareness of nature as a holistic entity. Similarly, Cassy became more mindful of the natural processes around her. She stated that she also became aware of why she valued her relationship with nature, thereby indicating that awareness of her own internal processes was enhanced due to the film-making experience.

Alex also became more aware of the reasons he appreciates nature, showing an enhanced self-awareness. He found that his abstract reasons became more concrete. Melissa reported increased knowledge about the utility of film making in the context of her relationship with natural light, as evident from realizing that she could bring out her spirituality through the film-making process. Cassy, Alex and Melissa all mentioned that they engaged in deep reflection during the film-making process. As they explored their relationships with nature in greater depth, they realized the significant role nature plays in their lives.

Furthermore, participants' human-human relationships affected the deepening of their nature-human relationships. Miriam's relationship with nature was intertwined with her relationship with her family. Her family activities often involved learning about nature, culminating in the profound experience she had during her family trip to Yellowstone National Park. Cassy also recognized the important role Cody played in her relationship with her girlfriend, Vanessa, stating that Cody brings Vanessa emotional support when Cassy herself cannot. The other participants' human-human relationships also affected the deepening of their own nature-human relationships but in a way that is different from Miriam and Cassy, in that they felt frustrated and depressed in their human

relationships. For example, Alex spoke about how disconnected he felt in his relationships with human beings, and how nature became an escape from his stressful human-human interactions. Like Alex, Melissa characterized her human-human relationships with disconnection and depression perhaps with the exception of her husband but stated that a divine force transmitted through natural light gave her hope to live.

Participants also discussed how their films became a vehicle for being more open in their relationships with other human beings. Miriam stated her friends could deepen their understanding of her through watching her film. She stated that she hopes to show the film to others, so that others could understand her as well as increase their appreciation of nature. Alex also mentioned how he intends to share his film with others, indicating that he is welcoming others' understanding of his experience. Melissa discussed how she could work with me in completing my project, giving her hope that she could work with other human beings. Cassy discussed how the film-making reminded her of what she values about her relationship with Vanessa. My participants were describing ways that film-making about nature is conducive to deepening ROLE relationships with human beings.

Based on these findings, I will discuss how the results supported and expanded on ideas of Experiential Personal Constructivist Psychotherapy (EPCP) as well as Attention Restoration Theory (ART). In the EPCP framework, I also will discuss clinical implications of the findings. In addition, I articulate how theorists can use the medium of film for both EPCP and ART. As I explore these implications, I also will discuss future directions that researchers could take with the findings of this study. I will conclude the discussion with a reflection on what I learned through this study.

Experiential Personal Constructivist Psychology (EPCP)

My study was the first within the EPCP literature to investigate the deepening of our relationships with non-humans using film-making. Although EPCP researchers (e.g., Adame & Leitner, 2011; Leitner, 2010) have discussed transpersonal relationships in terms of “world at large,” “shared humanity,” and “more-than-human-world”, no EPCP researcher has conducted a study on specific relationships between humans and non-humans. My study adds to the EPCP literature by illustrating what is meant by the

“transpersonal” world as participants specifically discussed relationships with non-humans.

One challenge in identifying whether participants had a ROLE relationship with nature is that the participants did not provide accounts for nature returning affection. As such, I could not say that their relationship is a mutually intimate one. EPCP scholars (e.g., Adame & Leitner, 2011) often described ROLE relationships as involving two people coming to know each other’s construal processes. In contrast, my participants did not describe much mutual intimacy, let alone their natural counterparts were not “people.” Based on this concern, I propose to modify EPCP to include a new concept to describe nature-human relationships. Kelly (1955) himself stated that theories have both “range” and “focus” of convenience. By “range,” Kelly meant the “expanse of the real world over which a given system or theory provides useful coverage” (p. 13). Kelly stated that the range of psychology could change over time, as he said, “if our theoretical reasoning is extended, further areas may fall within our kin.” (p. 13). As for “focus,” Kelly referred to “points at which [theories] are particularly useful.” (p. 17). According to Kelly’s framework, ROLE relationships are a focus for EPCP, and its range might extend to nature-human relationships. However, there are ways that our relationships with nature fall outside the range; hence, I will develop a relational conceptualization that could fit nature-human relationships within EPCP.

In modifying EPCP, I will use the term “nature-human ROLE relationship” to describe when a person can be aware of nature’s construal processes and appreciate them. Using this concept, I also can clarify what I mean by “deepening.” A person deepens a nature-human ROLE relationship when one’s increases the awareness and appreciation of nature’s construal processes. My choice to use the term “deepening” comes from Leitner’s (2009) considerations in describing the therapist-client relationship. Leitner stated that he intentionally used the term “deepening” instead of “establishing” in describing the therapist’s first session with the client. Leitner stated that the clients have “numerous thoughts, fantasies, beliefs about the person they are about to meet” (p. 202) before their first sessions, pointing out that the therapist-client relationship has started before the therapist meets the client for the first time. Likewise, I use the term “deepening” when describing the participants’ relationship with their natural counterparts

to emphasize that their nature-human relationships were already existent, but they have changed due to the film-making experience.

Participants stated that they have become more aware of nature and learned why they appreciated them, conforming to EPCP's interpersonal ROLE relationships. Leitner and Faidley (1995) stated that, in ROLE relationships, we understand the core constructs of another, which "form the foundation of our entire interpersonal world" (p.292). They stated, "Thus, in a ROLE relationship, you allow another access to the very process of your life evolution" (p. 292). Except for Alex, participants established that they have nature-human ROLE relationships as they discussed how nature is central in their lives. They also showed that they deepened their relationships with their increased appreciation and awareness. For example, Miriam discussed making nature her academic pursuit, stating that she wants to be "the bridge between science, nature, and humans." In her pursuit, she hoped that she can raise awareness about global warming. Miriam stated that she wants to be involve in nature conservation so that "future generations can appreciate it," acknowledging her impact on the future of the environment. She deepened her nature-human ROLE relationship, as she made a film that reminds her the importance of nature in her life. She later commented that her "video is to be like 'hey look up every once in a while and see what's around you and appreciate it', and I have to remind myself to do that too." By making and watching her film, she could be more aware and appreciative of nature. While Alex's nature-human relationship was limited compared to other participants, he showed that he too became more aware and appreciative of nature's role in his life. While he did not mention elaborate on the role of nature at first, he stated that he "came to think of [nature] as a home that I never really had" during the second interview." He remembered his childhood home as an unwelcoming environment. In contrast, he stated, "You can invite whoever you want in nature." As he understood how nature is invitational, he became aware and appreciative of its significance in his life, indicating that his nature-human relationship had become less limited.

Transpersonal reverence. I interpreted participants' appreciation and awareness of their nature-human relationships as aligned with the EPCP concept of reverence. Leitner and Pfenninger (1990) defined reverence as the awareness that one is validating the core construal process of another. Adame and Leitner (2011) described reverence as

one hallmark of having a ROLE relationship, and “one of the highest levels of psychological functioning” (p.51). If the participants had intimate nature-human ROLE relationships with nature, their experiences should fit the characteristics of reverence as explained in the framework of EPCP. Adame and Leitner stated that reverence has three defining characteristics: 1) the reverence for another, in which one acknowledges the courage the other takes in engaging in the relationship, despite the risk of invalidation 2) the awareness of the other’s revering of you, in which one takes the courage to accept the other’s reverence for one, despite how many times one was invalidated in the past 3) reverence for others in which one confronts the objectifications one used to see other people, and eventually sees others unbound by gender, race and other categories.

Participants in this study spoke about their relationships with nature in a way that could exemplify EPCP’s characteristics of reverence as articulated above. For example, Cassy acknowledged the risks in nature-human relationships, conforming to the first characteristic of reverence mentioned above. Cassy exhibited transpersonal reverence when she discussed the risks she poses to nature: “in my daily life, everything from driving to this and that, it’s hurting her and it’s making her bleed.” As she anthropomorphized nature, she recognized nature’s pain and the risks involved in there being a nature-human relationship. These statements illustrate my previous comment about participants’ awareness of their impacting nature.

In addition, Alex and Melissa both showed their acceptance of being revered by the other despite being invalidated in the past, the second characteristic of reverence. Alex discussed how he felt uncomfortable at his childhood, and how he felt excluded in the apartments. Despite the exclusion he felt among human beings, he could accept nature as an environment where he could feel at home. Melissa also felt disconnected from others. However, she showed her courage of accepting the validation, as she stated, “it gives me reassurance, that validation, that I’m ok, I worked with someone I didn’t know. I could go work with someone else too.” Cassy also mentioned her abuse and being deprived of interacting with nature. However, she stated that she now sees her pets as her “kids” who need her as a “caretaker,” suggesting that she is aware of natural beings appreciating her presence. Miriam did not mention being invalidated in the past. However, her acceptance of being revered by nature was evident throughout her

interviews, as she discussed how “[she] has gotten so much out of” her natural interactions and conservation efforts.

Finally, all participants showed that they could overcome the objectification of their nature-human relationship, the third characteristic of reverence. In Buber’s terms, participants engaged in their relationships with nature as “I-thou (you)” relationships without objectifying them into “I-it” relationships. Cassy most explicitly addressed the construct of objectification; she attempted to show the perspective of Cody with her decision to make the film without sound with the intent of helping the viewer understand Cody’s experiences while acknowledging Cody’s deafness. Melissa also did not objectify natural light into a mere inanimate force, as she saw it as a spiritual force connecting her to a higher being. From such findings, I concluded that participants could experience reverence towards non-human animals and nature at large. Their experiences serve as concrete examples of transpersonal reverence, the ability to approach other living beings beyond human-human relationships (Leitner & Faidley, 1995; Leitner, 2010; Adame & Leitner, 2011).

Based on the findings, we can elaborate on EPCP’s formulation of transpersonal reverence. Leitner and Faidley (1995) stated that transpersonal reverence grows out of interpersonal reverence. Adame and Leitner (2009) stated, “Without the experience of interpersonal reverence, a person cannot truly experience transpersonal reverence, because in order to revere humanity one must have experienced reverence in one’s own life and interpersonal relationships” (p.259). From these statements, Leitner and others posit a direction in their development of reverence, such that reverence grows from a person to humanity at large, and then to non-human beings. Consistent with this direction, Miriam talked about how her relationship with nature developed from her parents’ teachings: “whenever I was out in nature, my parents were always teaching me at the same time.” The history of nature-human relationship started in her interaction with her relationship with her parents, supporting Adame and Leitner’s original statement.

However, I observed in this study that we can experience transpersonal reverence without human reverence, as some participants in this study described transpersonal reverence even without meaningful human-human relationships. Cassy stated that her relationship with animals did not necessarily grow out of her deep relationship with her

family, as she mentioned her experience of abuse and expressed dissatisfaction about being deprived of nature. She remembered thinking, “I want more from life than this, I want to be healthier, I want to be going outdoors.” In addition, as her relationship with her pets was one of her first deep relationships from childhood, she seemed to appreciate her relationship with nature in the void of her relationship with human beings. She described having intimate human relationships later than her nature-human relationships, diverging from Adame and Leitner’s (2011) proposed directionality. One may say that Cassy treated her nature-human relationships as human relationships, so her reverence for nature may not be “transpersonal.” However, such a counterpoint suggests that humanizing relationships with nature is the way we can attain reverence for non-human beings and does not refute my claim that we can attain reverence for non-humans before humans.

Alex’s experience also muddies the direction from human to non-human. Both his human-human and nature-human relationships seemed to be the least elaborate of all the participants. He described his interpersonal relationships as limited, stating “I’m very introverted, so a lot of stress involved with people sometimes.” His nature-human relationship also seemed to be the least reciprocal among the participants, as other participants described nature as a living being, with Cassy anthropomorphizing nature (“It’s making her bleed and it’s hurting her.”) and Melissa assigning a spiritual meaning to nature (“Spirituality rides on the beam of the light coming through.”). Miriam also described nature as her “outlet and passion,” and showed her commitment to her nature-human relationship as she decided to study about nature conservation. In contrast, Alex described nature as a “home [he] never had.” While his nature-human relationship became less shallow, his account of nature was more passive than others (“It’s just nature.”). I could not conclude that he has a nature-human ROLE relationship, and perhaps his nature-human relationship was not deep enough to reach the level of having transpersonal reverence. Still, his nature-human relationship was more affirming than his human-human relationships, as evident from the fact that nature was a home he never got in his human community. Further, his nature-human relationship started from his frustrations with interpersonal relationships as he said that he “discovered nature, and how much it’s very beautiful and just like also a good way to get away from people.” His

statement shows that he found the potential to revere nature without attaining reverence for other humans. After film-making, he even alluded to being open to deepening his human-human relationships, as he stated that he could “invite whoever you want in nature.” Alex’s account might complicate Adame and Leitner’s proposed direction from interpersonal to transpersonal relationships.

Participants’ experiences above do not necessarily follow the direction of experiencing interpersonal reverence first, followed by transpersonal reverence. Participants who experienced interpersonal injuries or distress, such as Cassy and Alex, might attain reverence with nature prior to making deeper contact with humans. For these participants, their nature-human relationships might heal the injuries they sustained from human-human relationships. In contrast, Miriam did not discuss interpersonal injuries. For her, she stated that her relationship with nature deepened as her human-human relationships deepened. Comparing Miriam and other participants, people who had affirming human-human relationships seem like they can experience reverence with humans prior to nature.

Further, participants’ constructions of the two categories, interpersonal and transpersonal reverence, may not be distinct enough to warrant the specific order. Participants’ constructions of their natural counterpart could be within the category of “personhood,” which Cassy most notably demonstrated by describing nature as a person. Further, she was not concerned with the distinction between human and non-human in her construction of family as she considered her pets as close family members. In addition, Alex had ongoing questions about whether his hometown was “like a small town with some nature areas around it or is it like us versus the forest with some buildings in it,” indicating that his nature-human dichotomy is ambiguous. As Alex also described nature as a “home [he] never had,” what mattered to Alex was belonging to a community and feeling authentic.

Future researchers could explore whether people with past interpersonal injuries attain reverence with nature prior to having deep human-human relationships, much as Cassy seemed to in my study. Researchers could compare such participants with people who had affirming human-human reverence and see how past interpersonal injuries affect the order of attaining interpersonal and transpersonal reverence. They could interview

participants' relational history with both humans and nature focusing on how nature-human relationships deepened against the backdrop of human-human relationships. Such a study could add to the EPCP literature by identifying factors that could affect the direction of interpersonal and transpersonal reverence.

Transpersonal responsibility. Adame and Leitner (2011) stated that reverence involves recognizing our place in the interconnected universe, and from the recognition we become committed to a purpose larger than ourselves. Adame and Leitner (2011) defined this commitment as transpersonal responsibility. As my participants experienced transpersonal reverence, they also spoke about their transpersonal responsibility. As stated in her first interview, Miriam felt we must improve our treatment of nature and made a film to encourage people to pay more attention to the natural environment around them. She explicitly stated, "this video is to be like 'hey look up every once in a while and see what's around you and appreciate it.'" Melissa also spoke about her transpersonal responsibility, as she told of her spiritual journey in the form of a film to encourage salvation for others who could be struggling with their darkness. She even stated that she can work with others now that she learned that she can make a movie in her relationship with me, echoing Adame and Leitner's point about "responding to the call of others" (p. 27) once we can find reverence in intimate one-on-one relationships. As these participants experienced reverence in their relationships with nature, they recognized their place in the interconnected universe. As they gained further awareness of their roles in this world, they could realize their transpersonal responsibility. Inversely, Alex characterized his nature-human relationship with less reverence compared to other participants; hence he also did not display his commitment to transpersonal relationships, suggesting less transpersonal responsibility.

The scope of my study concerned the immediate effects of film-making on the participants' relationships with nature. Participants demonstrated their transpersonal responsibility with their missions to teach others about nature's appeal through their film. In future studies, researchers could investigate the long-term effects of film-making on participants' treatment of nature. In a hypothetical extension of this study, it would be beneficial to see whether Miriam has continued to pay close attention to her natural surroundings, whether Alex has continued to spend more time outside in nature, whether

Melissa has reached out to others about the spiritual messages of natural light, and whether Cassy maintained a close relationship with Cody (as well as her cat). I also want to see whether any of them contributed to environmentalist efforts since their participation. Finding the long-term effects of film-making would be important, as it could lead us to find ways of deepening nature-human relationships that are long-lasting.

Clinical implications. Adame and Leitner (2011) pointed out that clients ideally experience transpersonal reverence as part of their therapeutic growth. If, through film-making, participants could develop transpersonal reverence and responsibility, then film-making could be effective in healing. Melissa discussed the ways film-making enabled her to express her spirituality. She stated she thought about “what light means” to her, how it makes her feel, and then came to a meaningful appreciation of her spirituality. Once she arrived at the theme of spirituality, she stated that it was “easy” for her to write the voice-over containing her main spiritual message. After making the film, she cried and said that she gained hope for connecting with others. (“It gives me reassurance, that validation, that I’m ok, I worked with someone I didn’t know. I could go work with someone else too”) As Melissa discussed being depressed and disconnected from others, her experience of intimately sharing her life story echoed Adame and Leitner’s (2011) statement about the client’s experience in psychotherapy: “It is a powerfully healing experience for clients who have in the past been so deeply injured by others to start to risk greater intimacy with their therapist.” Melissa stated that she has been feeling depressed and disconnected from others. While she seemed close to her husband, I could not conclude that they have a ROLE relationship because I did not inquire about her human relationships, a topic outside of the scope of this study. However, she realized that she could connect with others by making a film and taking the risk of exploring and expressing her core concepts, as she stated, “It’s just a good feeling to me to be able to open up and just share what I have to offer.”

Participants discussed film’s ability to share experiences with others. For example, Miriam commented that she showed her movies to friends, and that she will show it to her family as well. She wanted others to know her and her love for nature more by watching the film that she made. Further, Melissa chose a career that allows her to externalize her feelings and reach out to others. Miriam and Melissa demonstrated that

film-making could have a potential to convey personal experiences to many others, a particularly important feature in improving our collective relationship with the environment. As film is a medium that conventionally asks for an audience, others can sit and watch the film-maker's newly constructed art. In psychotherapy, Adame and Leitner (2011) described the therapist's role as one who bears witness to the client's suffering. By watching personal films, the audience can bear witness to the film-makers' lives and relationships, embodying a goal of therapy in EPCP. As such, film-making enables the film-maker to share something meaningful, and for the world to validate it. Based on this discussion, one way to expand on this study would be to assess how the screening process could affect the film-maker and their audience members. Such a study could investigate the effect of validation for the film-maker, as well as whether the audience members felt differently about their own relationships with nature. By investigating how the audience members validate or invalidate the film, they could offer important information about what kinds of films are most effective in raising environmental awareness. Further, researchers could find ways to reach out to more people in raising environmental awareness by focusing on both creators and viewers of films.

I interpret my findings as consistent with past literature that examined the therapeutic effects of film-making (Johnson & Alderson, 2008). Participants in this study reinforced film-making's potential as a psychotherapeutic tool. Furthermore, Johnson and Alderson (2008) stated that, while many researchers have investigated the therapeutic effects of film-making, they asked participants to make films collectively as a group, as opposed to individuals making their own films about subject matters that were personally important to them. To my knowledge, no one has investigated the therapeutic effects of individual film-making about our relationships with nature. In this context, this study is the first to have found that film-making could lead to improving our relationships with the subject matter.

Based on the discussion above, researchers could explore how distress and trauma affect the therapeutic benefits of film-making. Melissa elaborated her personal experiences about mental health more than the other participants. At one point, she stated, "they were very low points where I did not want to continue life." After her film-making, she cried and vividly spoke to her experience of finding hope. As such, the changes in her

relationship with nature seemed far more therapeutic than other participants. Melissa's disclosure about her mental health makes me wonder how a participant's past distress and trauma affect film-making's benefits on one's relationships with nature. In a future study, researchers could work with participants who experienced trauma as well as participants who claim they have had little trauma. By having both groups of participants make film, researchers could investigate whether film-making would have larger therapeutic effects for participants who suffered through trauma compared to participants who claim no traumatic experiences.

Participants' relationships with me. I acknowledge that participants' relationship with me was a significant part of their film-making experience. Most notably, Melissa discussed explicitly how helping me was a major motivation for her to do the study. In addition, her realization that she could work with me ("someone I didn't know") led to the outcome that she could become more spiritual with others ("I could go work with someone else too.") Cassy also showed her enthusiasm for my project. As she asked me about how my research was coming along, she showed that she was invested in my progress. From such interactions with participants, I realize that participants' relationships with me were major motivations to make their films. Furthermore, I asked about the nature-human relationships participants planned to explore in their films in the first interview. As participants responded to my questions about the subject matters of their films, I was inevitably a part of their reflections on their nature-human relationships. In addition, I showed participants my own personal film. Although I told the participants that their films do not need to be similar to mine, their films contained much first-person footage like mine did.

Based on factors above, I believe the researcher-participant relationship played a major role in the conceptualization and production of their films. As such, I also played a role in the deepening of their nature-human relationships. In future studies, researchers could focus more on the researcher-participant relationship during their interviews to investigate the effects of researcher-participant relationship further. Such modifications would elucidate the extent of the researchers' effect on the participants' relationships with nature. In addition, as Melissa felt empowered about how she could work with a stranger, future researchers could also ask participants' friends or family to be the guide

for some of the participants. Including participants' friends or family could help ascertain how the results could be different if the participants worked with someone they did know.

Attention Restoration Theory

Kaplan (1995), with Attention Restoration Theory (ART), claimed that engaging with natural beings and environments could restore one's "directed attention" (p.170). Ohly and colleagues (2016) further defined directed attention as "the ability to focus on a task that requires effort." Directed attention is distinguished from "fascination" (De Young, 2010, p.15) or involuntary attention that we use when we attend to certain objects and processes that "effortlessly engage our mind" (p.15). Directed attention then is the ability to focus on objects and tasks that do not immediately grab our interests. Consistent with the basic thesis of ART, participants all reported that their attentiveness was heightened by engaging with natural stimuli: Miriam stated that she paid attention to her surroundings to see what would look good in a video. Alex stated that he looked at objects more closely when he went on his trail to shoot his film. While Melissa did not explicitly state that she became more attentive, she stated that she became more aware of herself saying that "did not realize [she] could be this spiritual." Cassy stated that she became more mindful about her interactions with others. Even after filming, participants exposed themselves repeatedly to the nature-related footages as they edited the footages. In different stages of film-making, participants were, as Miriam stated, "forced" to attend to the natural world repeatedly and became more attentive towards their surroundings. Prior to my study, researchers have not incorporated film-making in the field of ART. In contrast to ART that claims that we enhance our *general* attentiveness after exposure to nature, my participants often spoke about being attentive *towards nature*. I believe the specificity of my participants' increased attention is due to my research question concerning relationships with nature, and not general attentiveness. In future ART studies, researchers can incorporate film-making as nature-related media and examine whether the enhanced attentiveness extends beyond natural surroundings. Such a study would add to ART by ascertaining the scope of film-making's benefits to one's attentiveness.

Kaplan's (1995) formulation of ART helps to explain specifically how film-making led to attentiveness for my participants. For example, Kaplan stated that people

become more attentive by shifting attention away from daily stressors and into the natural world. In line with this component, Miriam and Cassy stated that the “artificial,” “mundane” world can exhaust them and that being with nature had healing effects. Alex also described nature as a place that is distant from stressful human interactions. Melissa also described the inside of the house with a person’s depressed, reclusive inner state and the outside as the place to distance oneself from one’s troublesome thoughts. Seeking refuge was part of all the participants’ relationships with nature.

Kaplan (1995) also stated that one needs to have “soft fascination” (p.172) with the environment to restore one’s focus. Kaplan stated, “there is the 'hard' fascination of watching auto racing and 'soft' fascination of walking in a natural setting. Soft fascination – characteristic of certain natural settings – has a special advantage in terms of providing an opportunity for reflection,” (p.172). Based on Kaplan’s statement, “hard fascination” refers to the state of being highly stimulated to the point that one cannot engage in reflection. In contrast, “soft fascination” refers to the state of being interested while having the capacity to engage in reflection. If one were preoccupied with an activity, then one would find it more difficult to reflect actively. In her film-making experience, Miriam stated that she needed to reflect on her relationship with nature as she repeatedly watched the footages. As a result, she reported that she now looks at her surroundings more carefully so that she could think about what would look good in a video. Furthermore, Alex discussed having deep reflections about what he values about nature, as well as “looking at everything more closely” during filming. The process of film-making required participants to be softly fascinated, thereby becoming more attentive towards their natural surroundings.

Film-making about nature. Other than Harness and Drossman’s (2011), this is the only study that looked at the effects of film-making on our relationship with nature. As Harness and Drossman focused on environmental education, my study stands out as the only one to examine the depth of relationships between the participants and their natural counterparts. Only a few studies have used film as a tool to facilitate interest in the environment (Surmeli, 2013), but most of them focused on watching film and videos as opposed to having the participants make films themselves. Participants’ experiences

support film-making's ability to raise consciousness about our relationships with the environment.

The process of making a film was meaningful in assessing and deepening participants' nature-human relationships, because participants actively engaged with their natural counterparts. Cassy's comparison between poetry and film highlights a reason why participants could be more active in their interactions with nature. In contrast to poetry, Cassy stated that film-making felt like a "found art" experience. The phrase "found art" implies that there is art that already exists with which the artist can enter a relationship. In contrast, while the poet could write about nature, one is not required to use pieces of nature in the construction of the poem. Doing "found art" forces the artist to engage in an interaction with nature. For example, the filming component required Alex to take actual walks on his nature trail. Miriam needed to get close to the bison to get a closer shot. Likewise, Melissa chose a location that had an abundance of natural light, the symbol of her spirituality. Cassy could remind herself what she values about her relationship with Cody through her camping trip. As participants stated that their film could be a way to remind people about the appeal of nature, the active participation with film-making seemed to be effective in empowering participants to affect others.

Furthermore, participants needed to be highly engaged during multiple stages of film-making to complete their films. They reflected on their relationship with nature, took footage while interacting with natural beings, and combined different audio and visual elements into a cohesive art piece. I believe all components were necessary in becoming more aware of their relationships. Through conceptualizing, filming, and editing, participants structured their film to evoke an effect that would not be possible if they simply recorded footage. For example, Miriam stated that her relationship with nature "was heightened by being able to look back on it, to reflect on it" after making a film where she visually paired different footages. The process of introspecting and connecting disparate pieces to form a meaningful whole enabled participants to reflect deeply on their relationships with their subject matters, making them more aware and appreciative of their relationships.

Past researchers have seen that one's effortful involvement with nature is important in having hope about improving relationships with the natural world. While

interviewing high-school students, Connell and colleagues (1999) found that, while many participants could gain information about environmental degradation through passively watching TV, they felt powerless about improving the relationship. Participants in Connell et al's study stated that they needed to be actively engaged with nature to have an interest in improving the relationship. Should my participants had merely watched films, they would have lacked the component of thinking hard about how they were going to create the film, as well as interacting with the subject matter and finding something new. By making a film, my participants could use their sense of aesthetics and engage with nature in a physical way. In the process of creating art, they were able to have intimate encounters with nature, which turned the project beyond a passive awareness-raising exercise into a personally relevant experience.

One future study could split participants into a group that makes film and one that watches film and see how they differ in their engagement with the natural world. No researcher has included both film-makers and film-watchers in one study. By comparing the results between two groups, we could identify the effects of actively engaging with the environment, as opposed to passively watching it. Based on the results of this study, I expect that the film-making group will feel more attentive and engaged with the natural environment than the film-watching group. Such a study could add to field of nature-related film-making by substantiating the role of film-making in deepening our relationship with nature.

Limitations and Future Directions

In expanding the research on film-making about our relationships with nature, future researchers will need to be careful in handling differences in the participants' level of familiarity with film-making. If the participants lack familiarity with film-making, they might have difficulty and become frustrated in bringing their visions into reality, possibly affecting their relationships with nature. While Melissa had familiarity with the technical aspects of film-making, the student participants did not. For example, Alex stated that he felt a "limitation of [him] as a filmer" when he saw that his footage did not authentically represent his experience of walking in the nature trails. Alex learned from the limitation that the actual experience of nature is irreplaceable. Still, his limited experience with film-making complicated film-making's effect on his relationship with

nature, as he found carrying film equipment being “restrictive” for him from enjoying his nature walks. On a related note, Cassy stated, “Inherently by filming it, you’re disrupting it in some way. Because there were moments when there was a lot of emotions, pulling out a phone to film it would have perhaps disrupted that emotion...” While Cassy stated that film-making ultimately helped her become more mindful of nature, she raises a possibility in which film-making could be only disruptive in one’s connection to nature. From such observations, I wonder, if one lacks experience in film-making, does the lack of experience affect the film-makers’ relationships with their subject matter? Answering this question would add to the field by identifying what factors enhance film-making’s effects on our nature-human relationships as well as exploring the adverse effects of film-makings. To address this point, other researchers could recruit participants from different levels of film expertise. For example, researchers could find participants for at least three different groups: a group of participants with no experience in film-making, a group with students who have taken some classes in film-making, and a group of professional film-makings. Researchers could also divide each group into doing one of two courses: half of each group could shoot a film in a designated nature area, while the other half could walk around the designated area without film-making. In this way, researchers could try to ascertain the ways the level of film-making affect the participants’ relationships with nature and distinguish one’s familiarity with film-making from other factors.

Furthermore, each participant had a different interpretation of the term “nature,” ranging from an overarching ecological system, a specific location, a natural element, or a specific non-human being. The loose definition of “nature” gave the participants creative freedom to choose the subject matters in the films and allowed for diversity in participants’ relationships with nature. Due to these differing interpretations, the participants changed the ways they talked about their natural counterpart. For example, Cassy was the only participant to choose a non-human being as her subject, as opposed to an inanimate element or environment. I believe having her pet as the film’s subject matter made it easier to talk about her relationship as if it was an interpersonal relationship. (“Every now and then when she’s gone I will say to Cody, ‘You know, you really helped mom get through some hard times. So, thank you.’”). Other participants, such as Miriam and Alex, interpreted nature as a system or a specific natural environment. Compared to

other participants, Cassy was the most overt in treating her relationship with nature as an interpersonal relationship. Based on such differences, future researchers could see whether film-making affects our relationships with non-human animals differently from natural environments. We could elucidate whether the interpretation of nature as human makes a difference in the effects of film-making on our relationship with nature. For example, a future study could ask one group of participants to make films about their pets and another group to make films about their favorite natural environment to investigate the differences between types of relationships. Such a study could provide information about whether animal-human relationships are easier to deepen than environment-human relationships. Such information could be helpful when we use research findings to campaign for environmental awareness, as we may find it more effective to focus on one type of nature-human relationship, rather than allowing broad interpretations of nature.

It is important to be cognizant of different cultures and communities that have fundamentally different relationships with nature than the participants in this study. I acknowledge that my interviews did not focus on many aspects of participants' identities such as their age, gender, race etc. As such, I do not have data to draw conclusions or offer suggestions about how such identities affected their film-making process. While we do not see them in my data, one's identities shape one's experiences (and vice versa) especially with the premise that we live in an interconnected universe. Hence, future studies could improve my method by interviewing participants about their identities and how they could affect their film-making as well as their relationships with nature. Such a study would be important as it could help us find ways of improving nature-human relationships that are considerate of diverse groups of people and their backgrounds.

All the participants already had established some affinity with nature prior to their involvement of study. Alex, though limited, had made walking on the trails a part of his routine. Originally, I had anticipated recruiting a wide range of participants in terms of their affinity for nature, varying from those with strong passion to those who are disinterested. When I started recruiting participants, I only received notices of interests only from those who already have substantial relationships with nature. Hence, the findings of this study are limited to people who already express an affinity for nature, and I was not able to investigate whether the film-making would arouse interests in those with

no prior interest in nature. I attribute this result to my recruitment method, in which I had fliers that invited to talk about their experience with nature. I see retrospectively that those with no interests in nature would have little to no interests in talking about their experience with nature with me.

I believe that it is important to see how film-making could affect people with no interest in nature; if we can find a way to arouse interests in those who are apathetic towards nature, we could foster new nature-human relationships and increase the number of people who could tend deeply to nature. Future researchers could conduct a study with participants who are apathetic about nature in the beginning of the study. Given that these participants would likely not have pre-established deep relationships with nature, researchers may be able to see the effects of film-making in deepening nature-human relationships. Even for those who are apathetic to the environment, I anticipate that film-making could enhance participants' interests in nature. As we saw in my study, film-making involves reflecting in-depth about certain aspects of nature, tangibly engaging with nature during shooting, and then watching footages repeatedly during the editing and screening process. Through these stages, I expect a participant could start a relationship with nature and develop interests and awareness towards the natural beings. Based on such a study, we could reach out to people who are disinterested in the environment and improve our collective relationship with the natural world.

What I Learned

As I asked my participants to make films about their relationships with nature, I saw that their relationships became deeper, consistent with the relational principles of EPCP. In addition, I observed concrete examples of participants having intimate relationships with nature and deepening them in ways that I have not read in the EPCP literature. Participants' reports also were consistent with the literature of ART in that they became more aware and articulate about their values, more attentive to the natural world and were excited to share their experiences with other human beings. As I saw the different ways participants made their films, I realized how different people's relationships with nature were, and could see the utility of the constructivist notion that the world is open to an infinite number of constructions (Leitner, 2010). I also reached an experiential truth amid the infinite numbers of constructions that I, along with others,

have precious relationships with the natural world, and that we need to continue to find ways of deepening our relationship with nature.

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Appendix A

Interested in participating in a research study
that involves a personal film-making project?

Do you have a story to tell about your
relationship with nature?

Aki Imai, M.A., a Clinical Psychology graduate student from Miami University is looking for participants in his dissertation project. In the project, each participant will make a film about their personal relationship with nature.

You must be 18 years-old or above.

NO previous experience with film-making required.

If you are NOT a UT-Austin student, you need your own videocamera.

Your participation will entail an initial meeting and two interviews (approximately 1-2 hours each). You will be asked about your relationship with nature and your experience of making the film.

This study is supervised by Dr. Larry Leitner (leitnerl@miamioh.edu)

Your participation in this research is voluntary.

This study is approved by Miami University IRB (approval#-00804r)

If you are interested, please contact Aki at imaih@miamioh.edu

Appendix B

Aki Imai Dissertation Guide

“The Role of Art in the Connection between Human and Nature”

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my project! In this project, you will have the opportunity to make a film about your relationship with a being from nature, which I call the “more-than-human world.” This can be your pet, a favorite tree, or even a particular location such as a river. The entire project will probably require about 1-4 months. Here are the steps involved in your participation.

1. First Meeting with Aki

a. Informed Consent

b. Interview about your relationship with the more-than-human being

Examples of questions I may ask:

- How have you known this [more-than-human being]?
- How much have you known [more-than-human being]?
- What makes this [more-than-human being] special to you?

c. Lend video camera

2 weeks – 2 months to shoot

- Remember, do not think about filming “correctly.” Shoot what feels evocative and beautiful about your relationship with the particular [more-than-human] being.
- Shoot at least 30 minutes of footage
- (your end product should be about 5 – 20 minutes long)
- If you have any questions, you can contact me via email at imaih@miamioh.edu. I will also contact you periodically to check how you are doing with the footage, and see when we can meet for the second meeting.

2. Second Meeting with Aki

a. Learn how to edit

1 month to edit

- My film-making is based on the assumption that there is no “correct” way to edit. Hence, editing is more of an art than a science – if you “feel” that it is right to keep one shot at a particular length, then I will instruct them to follow their heart.
- Your end product should be about 5 – 20 minutes long.
- Again, If you have any questions, you can contact me via email at imaih@miamioh.edu. I will also contact you periodically to check how you are doing with the footage, and see when we can meet for the third meeting.

3. Third Meeting

a. Give edited footage to Aki

After I watch the film, I will contact you to see when we can meet for the final meeting.

4. Final Meeting

a. Interview about your film-making

Examples of questions I may ask:

- How was your film-making experience?
- What are your reflections about the end product?

- What new things did you learn about yourself by working on this project?
- Do you feel like your relationship has deepened as a result of making the movie? How so?

Appendix C

Informed Consent

In this study, the primary researcher will investigate the experience of making a film about our relationship with nature. Should I agree to participate, I will be asked to make a film in which I explore my relationship with nature. This study has been approved by Miami University IRB (approval#00804r).

I also understand that if I agree to participate, I will engage in two interviews, each of which will last 1-2 hours.

My participation will start with the initial meeting which consists of the informed consent, the first interview, and receiving the camera. After 2 weeks – 2 months in which I film my footage, I will meet with the primary researcher for the second time to learn how to edit my footages. After a month to edit my footages, I will meet with the primary researcher for the third time to give him the finished product. I will meet with the primary researcher for the final time after he sees my finished product and contacts me. The final meeting will consist of the second interview in which he will ask me about the experience of film-making. I understand that the time in between interviews depends on my preference as well. Both interviews will be digitally audio recorded.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary. I understand that I am free to discontinue my participation at any time without penalty. I may also skip any questions that make me feel uncomfortable.

I understand that, if I wish, I may obtain written information about the outcome of the research at the end of the academic year. Upon request, I may receive a copy of the results via email or post.

The present research is designed to reduce the possibility of any negative experiences as a result of participation. Risks to participants are a minimum and no more than encountered in daily life. However, if my participation in this study has caused me concerns, anxiety, or otherwise distressed me, I understand that I may immediately withdraw from the study.

I understand that I will be given additional information after my participation is complete.

I understand that all data from this study will be kept confidential and that the data will be accessible only to Aki Imai, and the project supervisor (Dr. Larry Leitner), and any persons who may assist with transcription. I understand that neither my name nor any other directly identifiable information will be included in the final manuscript.

The possible benefits of participation in the present research are that participants may learn more about how psychological research is conducted. Specifically, the participants will have the opportunity to learn how their responses are observed and analyzed

I understand that I will be provided with a blank, unsigned copy of this consent form at the beginning of the study.

Should I have further questions about the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher, Aki Imai (imaih@miamioh.edu), or his research supervisor (Dr. Larry Leitner (317)289-1008 or leitnelm@miamioh.edu) in the Department of Psychology at Miami University if I have any questions or concerns regarding my participation in this study. If I have any questions about my rights as a research participant, I may contact the Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship at (513) 529-3600 or humansubjects@miamioh.edu.

Thank you for your participation. We are very grateful for your help and hope that this will be an interesting session for you. You may keep this portion of the page.

Cut at the line, keep the top section and return the bottom section.

I agree to participate in the study of film-making and my relationship with nature. I understand my participation is voluntary and that my name will not be associated with my responses. By signing below, I acknowledge that I am 18 years or older.

_____ I give my permission for the researcher to digitally audio-record my interviews.

_____ I give my permission for the researcher to quote from the responses I contribute in the interviews, verbatim, in part or in whole in any reports of this research. Prior to completion of the study or publication of any related reports, I am free to withdraw this consent for any reason. There is no penalty associated with withdrawing this consent.

Quoting from Interviews

Please initial one of the following two options:

_____ I give my permission for the researcher to quote from my interview responses I contribute, verbatim, in part or in whole in any reports of this research. Prior to completion of this research or publication of any related articles, I am free to withdraw this consent for any reason. There is no penalty associated with withdrawing this consent.

_____ I do not give my permission for the researcher to quote from my interview responses.

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature _____

Cut at the line, keep the top section and return the bottom section.

Consent form for individuals to be video recorded in the film

Aki Imai, a graduate student in clinical psychology at Miami University is doing a research study about people's relationship with nature. As a part of this study, participants will make a film about their relationship with nature.

In this form we ask for your permission to allow us to digitally video record you in the film made by _____ [name of the person making the video] and to retain the video recording.

After the film is made, a copy of the film will be given to Aki Imai. If you give permission for Aki to have access to the footage that includes me, his copy of the video will be stored on a password-protected computer (or a remote hard disk).

Please note that you are free to decline permission to be video recorded or for researchers to use your video recording without any penalty or loss of benefits. If you do consent to be video recorded and for the researcher to use your video in future, you may withdraw this consent for future use of the recording at any time by contacting the researcher (see contact information below). If you withdraw consent after video recording has occurred, the video file that the researcher has will be immediately and permanently deleted.

If you have questions about this research, you may contact the researcher, Aki Imai (imaih@miamioh.edu), or his research supervisor (Dr. Larry Leitner, leitnelm@miamioh.edu) in the Department of Psychology at Miami University. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights, you may contact the Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship at (513) 529-3600 or humansubjects@miamioh.edu.

Please indicate whether or not you consent to be video recorded, by initialing one or more of the options below:

_____ I do not give my permission to be video recorded and be included in the film

_____ I give my permission to be video recorded and be included in the film

_____ I give my permission for the video footage (that includes me) to be seen by the primary researcher Aki Imai and his research advisor Dr. Larry Leitner

_____ I give my permission for the video footage (that includes me) to be shown to Aki Imai's dissertation committee members, and shown at other academic conferences

By signing below, I acknowledge that I am 18 years or older, and I understand the information provided on form.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D:

Interview Protocol

The researcher will keep in mind that the questions on bullets are only asked when the participants are not able to elaborate.

First Interview – Relationship with nature

Can you talk about your relationship with your natural counterpart: something that is not human, something that is from nature?”

- How have you known this [natural counterpart]?
- How much have you known [natural counterpart]?
- What makes this [natural counterpart] special to you?
- Can you tell me a memorable story about your relationship with this [natural counterpart]?
- What impact did the [natural counterpart] have on you? What impact did you have on the [more-than-human being]?
- What role have you played in the life of this [natural counterpart]?
- How is your relationship with this [natural counterpart] different from your human-to-human relationships?
- Have you expressed to them how you were affected?
- Could you give an example?

Second Interview – The Experience of Film-Making

- How was your experience making the film?
 - What did you like about making this film?
 - What were the challenges of making this film?
 - What are your reflections about the end product?
 - How has this project influenced your well-being?
 - What new things did you learn about yourself by working on this project?
- How has your relationship changed as a result of making this movie?
 - In retrospect, what was your relationship with this [natural counterpart] like before working on this project? What is your relationship like now?
 - Do you feel like your relationship has deepened as a result of making the movie? How so?
 - Have you changed the ways you look at your relationship with the [natural counterpart]?

Appendix E:

Participant Interviews

- Aki
 - o Participant

Miriam First Interview

- Can you talk about why you were intrigued about this project?
 - o So what I was saying is that I was very initially very intrigued because I am a psychology major and I always had a passion for learning about the human mind and people interact and I've always loved observing peoples behaviors and understanding why they act the way they do and I've always been someone who's not super-opinionated or super-swayed by peoples behaviors because I always think that there's an underlying reason for the way they act. So that's why I was initially really intrigued by psychology, but then I always had a passion for science and the outdoors so I wanted to find a way to combine the two. I knew that with a Psychology major, I had room in my schedule to pursue Sustainability major, so then in my science classes I got to learn about nature, natural forces, natural resources and everything. I also got to pair that with the human aspect, and I found throughout my studies that there is a strong connection between. And right now, in the world of sustainability and conserving resources, for a lot of scientists, the missing link is the connection between science and society because we have the science that global warming is occurring. We know that the world is changing, but we don't know how to get people to be involved and kind of to dive into the issue. I want to be the bridge between science, nature, and humans. Then I also picked up a marketing minor because I was really interested in digital marketing and the creative aspects between how we can put information out there in a way that is psychologically pleasing to people and psychologically swaying. So, combining green marketing and green marketing strategies with sustainability and psychology. I thought I had a really good balance of everything that I was interested in doing. So I feel like this project kind of embodies that and I'm excited to do something that is psychologically pleasing to people in a video form that is therapeutic for me and people who are watching it. And combines nature and psychology. So it's perfect.
- That part about psychologically pleasing is exactly what this is about. If you are going to make a film and are going to be in touch with nature, you're going to be, well I don't know but my expectation is that you would feel good and be in awe of the nature.

- Yes, feedback is important especially when you make something creative when you can show it to other people and get feedback and rewatch it and that's why I think is so cool about the video is that whenever I made video in the past I always wanted to go back and rewatch it you know? And I feel like it's something that you keep wanting to go back to, because it sparks different memories and different instances every time, so.
- Cool that's awesome. So you have made videos before.
 - I've made some videos. I've worked...my little brother is the one who has the GoPro so we worked together on like taking footage while were on vacation and stuff. and I've made videos for other classes and stuff. They're nothing super in-depth but it always feels good to share something with other people. I think nowadays people are so much more likely to like smash that triangle play button on the video than they are to read something, because we are so used to seeing things visually. So I think it's going to be a more popular representation of information than what we experience.
- You have YouTube that is super popular, there's IMAX, there's lot of visual media. That's awesome that you already started to be creative with video making. So was it recording it or did you also have a chance to edit and stuff?
 - I haven't edited any of the footage from the vacation. My brother took some footage and edited it and he made a video, but it was more like action movies of him snow skiing and him doing physical things. So I'd like to kind of selectively take clips that are more focused on nature. From the videos, rather than the actions stuff that my brother likes. That's what I'm hoping to pull from it. So I haven't edited any of it but I've viewed a lot of the clips and everything. I'm excited to go back and have a reflection on the vacation because it's something that I keep thinking about.
- Yeah that's something that I want to ask you about. If I remember correctly from 5 minutes ago, you described it as life changing, and I was wondering what that was about
 - I think that it was a family vacation – being anywhere with my family is always rewarding because it's a time I get to spend with them. But I always wanted to take a trip out west, and I haven't been out west before. I was concerned because I wanted to go somewhere over winter break that was warm. And I felt I would get a lot out of somewhere that was really warm, getting away from the winter, getting away from the cold, but I went out west, and we were in the middle of Yellowstone park and there was two feet of snow everywhere, negative 20 degrees, but we were dressed for it, and I didn't even think about the cold for like a single

second because I was there because everything was so breathtaking and just the expanse of nature that I was able to experience at weeks period of time was unlike anything that I've ever been in before. I haven't been able to be outside that much, one week, ever, because we were outside from 7 am all the way until 6pm and we would go back out at night and go cross-country skiing so I was just in nature. And I wasn't around humans very much at all because not many people would travel to the park during the winter, so we would snowmobile for like over 200 miles and cover so much ground and didn't see a single human being. So having that experience with nature was just something I will...now I take for granted what I have here in the real world, kind a built world, it's just so different than what is natural and what's real.

- So it was just you and your family.
 - o Just me and my family and we did have a guide going through the park. Um and so I'm excited to share the footage, because I think you'll have a better idea of what it was like. But it was a really cool experience. I want to go back. I want to be able to share it with everyone that I know here, because they'll be able to experience the same thing.
- Yeah absolutely and the fact that you have the creative power to piece it together, that should be able to. I haven't been to yellow stone so what was that like? You were talking about the snow...
 - o There was a lot of snow and yellow stone national park is a caldera, so there's geothermal feature. All throughout the park it's kind of like one giant volcano basically. And so that's where the hot springs come from and the geysers and everything. To see those rising up from the snow in the winter and to see the bison that have been there forever, and all the wildlife combined together, and to learn about the natural forces that shaped that part, and the power that rises up from the earth constantly, that's just the only place in the entire world that's like that. To be able to experience it in the extreme of winter season, just you know, has really changed my perspective. And I feel like I've seen something that a lot of people don't get to see
- What were some of the new perspectives that you were gaining from that
 - o I think that sharing the experience with others was important. I think that if I experienced it on my own, I would've gotten something out of it, but there was a certain level of frustration in that I couldn't have the shared experience, like I want to talk about it with other people but they wouldn't understand. So, having my family members there to talk about it, and I can say things and they get what I'm saying, I think that aspect was important in making me feel good about the experience. I think doing it on my own,

I may not have gotten the same thing out of it, and then I also think that having time away from like technology, in a way from people, was important, because I had a lot of time to really think, and appreciate my life and what I've been exposed to and appreciate the fact that I was able to have that experience. It kind of just made me count my blessings I guess. Because not many people do get to experience that, so I think the fact that it was unique was important. Because I got to share with people and be like I did this, and they're like wow, I can't believe you got to do that so that feedback is important too. So a lot of it has to do with what other people think of my experience.

- So that communication.
 - o Mmhmm I think that's important. And then just like having those ...there were some moments where I just felt like I wasn't even in my own body, almost like an outer-body experience. In one instance we were snowmobiling through the park and we came up over the this hill and it opened up into this huge enormous valley, and the valley was just all white, because it was all snow and the sky was all white too. So it honestly felt like we were like in the clouds, and then there was the mist that settled in the valley too so we came out of the tress and we entered this abyss, just pure white. I mean it's something that you never thought that I would ever experience, and it took my breath away. And I feel like there was not that many times where I am like in an urban environment around people and my breath gets taken away. Like it took something simply natural for that to really happen.
- What did it feel like when you were in that abyss? Was it liberating? Was it scary?
 - o There was a part of it that was kind of scary. In that you didn't know what was coming next, but that was also the best part of it. Because when you're snowmobiling for that long in the park, you never know what's going to be around the corner. When you turn a corner, and there would be this big valley and we would turn a corner again and it would be like a mountain past waterfalls and then next turn would be a field of full of bison and so I think that there something about nature that's unpredictable, and that's out of control but it keeps me intrigued, keeps me wanting to enjoy nature.
- Yeah the predictability thing or lack thereof is a really interesting. Do you feel like you don't get a lot of that in what we kind of talked about as artificial or made...?
 - o I think that things that are man-made and on my day-to-day schedule are predictable compared to my experiences in nature. And my whole life,

I've intrigued by nature. I think that has something to do with it too. Because I think some people wouldn't have the same appreciation as I do. Just because it's an interest of mine. Ever since I was little my parents exposed me to nature. I grew up very comfortable in a natural environment, going camping, going hiking, I would go out and play in the creek and catch salamanders and that was one of my favorite things to do. Hiking in the woods, and playing with worms and digging the dirt, I was that kind of person growing up. So that was a part of me growing up and I think that's important too. So yeah, I think that there's something peaceful about it, but also something invigorating. And it gives you the thrill, having both of those things. Which in the day-to-day life, in the real world, in a set-schedule, criteria, something that you have to follow, you don't get that same level of peacefulness and unpredictability

- So nature has always been playing a significant role in your life. The experience in yellow stone was very prominent, but it wasn't like there was nature before that.
 - o Right. Nature has always been my outlet and like my passion. Whenever I see an image of a rainforest, or of natural scenery, it always excites me. I love national geographic, I love learning that kind of stuff. So it has been a part of me but I start to forget about it, especially on campus, because there are natural settings, but I don't force myself to go out and experience it as much. So I start to forget about it, and when I do, I decide to go on a walk to the woods, go out with my friends to [hometown] woods or something, then I get all round up again and get all excited. So I feel like it's something I forget about, and then when I do actually involve myself with nature, and make a conscious effort, I feel the rewards of nature. So I feel like it's not something that permanently made me feel better, but I need it in doses. It's something that I take in and it maybe fizzles out and I take it again, so like every experience it opens up a new opportunity for me to feel a reward by it
- That's awesome, that's really cool. To get a little bit of background. When you were talking about doing nature-y things with your family, where did that happen, where are you from?
 - o So, I'm from Ohio. And my mom grew up in Michigan; my dad grew up in Cincinnati so I always grew up in the Midwest. And my dad grew up on a farm on a hill, living up in the woods with his whole family and so he always spent his whole childhood running through the woods, and riding horses and doing stuff outdoors, he always lived outside throughout his whole childhood. So, he would always take me and my siblings into the woods, and he would take us and teach us about how the Native

Americans lived in the forest because that was a passion of his, because learning about Native Americans and how they ran and how they lived off of the land. And he always reminded us of that. So, from a young age I was always kind of intrigued by that and always wanted to be in nature. So I think it was partially how we were raised, but my sister experienced all the same things but she doesn't have the same passion for nature as I do. She's not big on hiking and camping and she doesn't like being in outdoors for too long. So I think a part of it is how I'm psychologically, naturally my personality is drawn to that. But then it's also kind of like something that I've grown up with, and that has influenced me too.

- So comparing yourself with your sister, your sister was never into that kind of stuff?
 - o She would enjoy it in small doses and she would have trouble...if we are like "lets for a hike" she would be like "oh no" we always joked with her because words like flora or words like bike, hike, those kind of things, like walk, she would never want to do. She was never excited to do it, but when she did it, she felt rewarded. Like "oh ok that was fun" but she never had the urge to make it happen.
- Ok so it was always after the fact
 - o It was always after the fact that she was inspired, and it would take her to, you know a little boost to go into those things. Whereas me I would do them on my own
- Because you were always excited to do that
 - o Yeah I was always excited to do those things.
- That's awesome. So what do you think it is about nature that excites you so much?
 - o I think it's the fact that it's natural, like it's almost overwhelming for me to think that a tree can grow, like the science behind it is exciting to me. Just that a tree would grow on it's own, and the world has always existed. I've always been, I've grown up with religion in my family, I've grown up catholic, I've always valued gods creation, and all that, and when I was younger, nature was a way for me to prey. And appreciating nature was a way for me to be prayerful, and I think I learn more about my faith as I've continued to, my faith is not as influence as it was when I was younger, but nature still is. And I'm always amazed by it. When I see simple things in nature, I get excited. And it's hard for me to describe it. And it's something that men can never re-create, like what's natural
- There's something very divine, something godly or spiritual about nature, even little things.
 - o And I feel like science can explain it, but they can only explain so much. I feel like evolution is something that always absolutely amazed me. The

fact that things have evolved and all that is natural started with the same basic elements, I think is just unbelievable. The fact that every species, every person who is here, are all from the same root. Molecules in the root element, so I think it's cool to think about. When I think about space and universe, everything can be considered natural, you know, and I think that gets me really excited.

- Yeah, human beings are part of nature too, you think?
 - o I think so too. So even though nature is not influenced by humans, we definitely are a part of it. So it's hard for me to take humans out of the picture. I always want to understand how humans are involved in nature. But I think that what intrigues human with nature is the fact that we weren't the ones that created it, because so much of our lives is stuff that we create, and we change and we influence, but nature is one of those things that we can't really, we can't genuinely recreate.
- Yeah it's outside of our control, I mean there's a modification that we could do, or we can like manipulate it, but it's not like we can create life.
 - o Exactly.
- Ok that's really cool. Something that made me think as you were talking was, well I think there's a theme of nature as a whole. And I was also thinking about, and you can say no if there isn't, but did you have a particular relationship with one being, if it's a tree or a pet or something
 - o I don't think it's ever been with a pet, I think for me it's kind of like all elements of nature and I've always have loved how different parts of nature interact. I haven't been as interested in microbiology, kind of like the hard science, I like ecology, and systems, and the whole environment. Like I love the idea of the ecosystem and how all aspects of nature are interrelated. How they work together. So I think that it has...I've never been drawn to one particular being, or one particular aspect of nature.
- So I guess in making this film, are you thinking of doing a broad picture of ecosystem.
 - o That's kind of what I'm leaning towards. I think as I start to film, I'll be able to identify themes and things that I've focused in my filming, or like common trends between different videos, I'll be able to pull together. So I think I'll be able to find some common trends rather than just doing an overview. Because I feel like with every experience that I have with nature, I think I can reach some new conclusion. So I do think that through my video, I'll be able to narrow in on something. That might be part of the experience. I don't have a specific thing in mind.

- That's awesome though. You have those expectations, and it's not just these broad brushstrokes of nature but you want to tie it together, you want to learn those common threads like you said.
 - o Yeah, I think so.
- Another thing that was kind of interesting when you were talking about your relationship with nature was just like those interactions between human beings and nature, and it sounds like in your personal experience, your family had such a bridging role between you and nature.
 - o I think it is the case. A lot of what I learned about nature is how humans have influenced it. So I think that I ...it's like it's impossible for me to think about nature without thinking about human interactions with it. Because there's not many places in the world that are untouched by humans. So I think anything that is really natural has still been affected by humans in some way. Because you know, everything we do affects nature. What we emit in the atmosphere, what we had done to change the landscape, and to changed the world. What might appear to be natural is not necessarily pure and natural, because of the way that humans have influenced it.
- Do you place any kind of judgment on that?
 - o I think that there is a part of me that wants to prevent it and preserve what's natural, but then there's the part of me that understands that the world has been changing forever, and that humans have been influencing it since we walked the face of the earth, and it's kind of like the natural course of things for the world to change and for nature to change, for it to bounce back in different ways and for it to kind of fall on it's weak points, so I think that I'm content with the fact that the world is going to change. I'm not like we need to save the world kind of thing, because I think that nature will take its course, like it always has.
- So it's not like something that is new that we are doing that is changing drastically, but it's always been the case.
 - o Right
- So in terms of how we interact with nature, how you interact with nature, what do you do? You mentioned a couple of things like being in it, and kind of appreciating it. Do you do anything else?
 - o I feel like I have done like hiking trips, or I went out to Colorado and hiked fourteener mountain and Huron and Antero, and I've kind of learned that it's rewarding to push my physical limit's. I mean it was exh[Texas town]g like climbing the mountain, we had 35 POM packs and we climbed all the way to the top and none of us was feeling pretty good. I think that when I was physically stressed, it was harder for me to

appreciate nature. So when...I liked doing something active, but I don't want to push my absolute physical limit's when I'm in nature. I like to be right on the edge and have doses of physical exertion but have time to sit back and relax and be at peace.

- To kind of have the serene moment.
 - o Right. I think serenity and quietness are really important in nature, so you can get the full experience.
- Not just the wild, exciting parts.
 - o Right. I think that both are important. To have a balance when you're in nature. I think that, even just walking around campus, I feel like I'm in nature because of the trees. Just because I'm outside. Just being outside is enough for me to feel better. When I'm sitting outside on a pretty day, I already feel better, just because the sun is shining and because I feel like I'm outside. And just like seeing the blue sky or even seeing it on a rainy day, the weather is an aspect of nature is moving to me. Like I always think about how much the weather has an influence on my mood. When it's a sunny day, even when it's cold, I feel so much better than if it's like really windy and cold and I don't want to go outside. In the winter, I almost feel trapped because every part of me wants to be outside, and wants to join outdoors, but when it's really cold, I cant. So I think even in day-to-day, the natural world has an influence on how I feel and how I respond to things in my environment.
- Right, because you were talking about having a limit on the things you are able to do. Does it directly affect your moods at all?
 - o I think it definitely does. When I haven't had a lot of time to be outside, then I start to think like, oh I really need to be outside, I want to be outside doing stuff and it starts to bring me down because it's a stress release for me to be able to be outside in nature, so it definitely has an effect on the mood. I always feel better when I find the time to enjoy nature and outdoors.
- Like you said it's a stress-relief. It relieves your stress. Does being inside add to your stress, do you think?
 - o I think being inside is good, but I think it's good because it makes me appreciate the outdoors. I'm not the kind of person that wants to live outside all the time. I think I like it because it creates a sense of balance for me.
- How often do you go outside?
 - o I think it depends on the season. At school, I love being able to walk to class. In high school, I walked from my house to the garage, get in the car, and then I would drive. I would be in the car, get out, and walk like across

the parking lot, go to school, drive, and I'd always be inside. And being in college, being able to walk to class, I'm constantly outside. I feel so much better knowing that I got that time outside. So I do spend a decent amount of time outside on a daily basis just because I'm walking to class and if it's nice out, I always take advantage of the opportunity to do my homework outside or spend time outside or do some type of physical activity outside. But in the winter that's a little bit harder. So it's definitely seasonal.

- So in terms of how you feel as a human being, there's difference between winter and summer.
 - o There's definitely a big difference especially in February. [Laughs] I can feel myself like I don't have the sun, I don't have a tan, I don't have as many opportunities to go outside, there's not much to do outside. But one thing I absolutely love is the change of the seasons. So I would never want to be just warm all the time I wouldn't want to live in a climate where it's considered to be perfect weather all the time. Because I love the change of the seasons, I get so excited every time the seasons begin to change. Even when it's going from fall to winter, I still get excited. Because the first snow, it's all new. So I like that nature is ever changing. It kind of like, I don't know, I'll constantly have something to look forward to because of the change of the seasons.
- What do you think it is about the change?
 - o Anything that is new is exciting to me. Something that is predictable so it's not scary. I know when spring is coming, everyone gets excited. You get to wear new clothes. You get to do new activities. The same thing happens with every change of the seasons. It's something that's new, but it's comforting because it's predictable.
- It's a cycle
 - o It's a cycle, and everything in nature is a cycle. There are things that are unpredictable. There are natural disasters, but even those tend to fall into some kind of a pattern or a cycle. So I've always been interested in all the different cycles of nature. Everything from the water cycle, to the nitrogen cycle, like everything goes in a pattern and is somewhat predictable and systematic.
- Does that tell you something about human lives?
 - o I think that our life can be looked at as something that's systematic, like how we go through life. I think that we are always content with something that is predictable. Like we really like things to be predictable. I feel like the biggest cause of stress, and I even learned this in psychology classes, is unpredictable stressors. Those are the things that worry us the most

because they are out of our control. Anything that's predictable and nature's predictability is something that is comforting. Except when it's not predictable, it's something that's overwhelming.

- Which is why the whole experience in Yellow Spring is interesting, because you were talking about kind of being out with that white field at large and how that was not exactly predictable, it was also scary too. But there was something good about that too.
 - o There was. There was something... because it felt very powerful and there are times when nature feels very powerful and that's when it does seem unpredictable, but there is something that feels very good about being overwhelmed in a positive way. I think that we live in a world where things don't surprise us that much, because we know so much about the world, so having experience where you feel overwhelmed but not in a stressful way, in a positive way is really rewarding. To feel the power of nature but not be negatively affected by it but be positively affected by it.
- What do you think your role is in nature?
 - o My role is one to appreciate it, and I think that it's kind of our role as human beings to understand how it works so we can appreciate it. I think that studying nature is important and I always loved the scientific method and testing things and understanding how things work is important because it allows us to appreciate it. If I didn't know how all these cycles work and how evolution changed our world I wouldn't appreciate as much. Because I wouldn't understand all that goes into it. I think that anyone who knows more about nature, is bound to have a great appreciation for it.
- I mean that also means nature meant a lot for you. You're not just doing good things for nature, nature has done good things for you.
 - o Definitely, all the resources that we have start with something that's natural. So everything we need to survive is in the natural world, so I think we owe it to nature to protect it, to study how it works, so we can protect it.
- So in terms of protecting it, do you do anything to conserve nature, or?
 - o I have always been interested in getting involved in nature conservancy and national geographic and their efforts to preserve and conserve what's natural, I think one of the reasons why I want to do that, is so people, humans, future generations can appreciate it too because I have gotten so much out of it. So I think there's the aspect of, we can't destroy this, people need to be able to enjoy it for a long time, and to be able to experience the things like we've experienced it. Like know what an

elephant looks like, and know what, to be able to see those things in real life, rather than just reading about them in books.

- So it's not doing nice things for nature, you also want to inspire other people.
 - o Yeah, I love being able to share my experiences with nature with other people. Because I want them to feel the same things that I'm feeling. If I do go off in the woods, sometimes I go by myself, and for long-term that's important, but I love inviting friends to go with me. Because for a lot of people I feel like it's not their go-to way of making themselves feel better. Like they kind of forget that they can go into nature, but they get scared by it. So I love inviting people to go with me, I grab my friends and say let's go on a hike and I'll take them down to the creek and it's something that they would've never done on their own and so they like get something out of it
- You're initiating something new for them.
 - o Right. Giving them a new experience that they will remember.
- And you like being on the other end of that, like here we are out in nature
 - o Yes. Helping people appreciate it, I think that makes me feel better.
- Something that keeps coming up as we talk is how much nature plays a role in other human beings.
 - o I think so too.
- Whether it's your family whether it's your friends, it sounds like it played a big role in your relationship with other people.
 - o I think it definitely has. People I think understand that I appreciate nature a lot, so they, it's kind of become a part of my identity too. People identify me with my experiences and the experiences that I share with them. They know that I sit at home and watch national geographic and animal planet and watching those kinds of things, because I'm so amazed by it and want to learn about it more. So in a sense it's become a part of me and a part of my identity
- Yes, it sounds like it. Other people know you as the person so one way they relate with you is that they're relating with someone to whom nature is a big part.
 - o I think that that's important. And it makes me feel good knowing that's how people, that's what people think of me. It makes me feel good to know that I have a love of nature and I appreciate it.
- Because your love of nature also invites them to love nature as well. Have you seen that, has anyone said anything like that?
 - o People have said things like, if I get on a tangent about something about nature, people will ask questions like why does that happen, and I will usually have some explanation about why scientifically. So they'll be like, Miriam nature girl, or say things like that. They understand that's what I

get excited about. Getting involved in nature and stuff. I've like heard that they relate to me because of that.

- Cool. So do you think inspired other people to love nature as well?
 - o I think I have been since my love of nature and what I've learned with something that was kind of passed down to me. Like my dad's family, I constantly want to inspire other people
- Because you're also saying future generations too, not just friends right now, not just people around you right now, but our children too.
 - o Yes exactly. I definitely think that the love of nature is something I want to instill, the opportunity to love nature is something I want to instill to the generations to come
- Could you talk a bit more about how it was passed down to you?
 - o Mmhmm. I think it was a lot of my experiences of actually being nature, and having the opportunity to be in nature is important, because a lot of people that don't grow up having those opportunities, they may grow up in the city and they never get to go off into the woods, so like those experiences feel very uncomfortable for them, and make them very nervous, and they don't really know how to respond to natural environment. They don't feel good when they have sleeves in their face and mud on their hands, I think since I grew up with it, I feel comfortable there. My dad has always said that that's his way, that's his happy place in when he's in nature. So that's been always in my mind. Being in nature is something like a safe place. He's always said that you're safer in the woods, than you are walking down the street. You are safer in the woods at night, than you are walking down the street. Because it's just a natural idea, because the woods are unfamiliar. I think that having it be familiar was really important for me to feel comfortable. 39:48
- So do you feel safer in the woods?
 - o I think that during the day, I think that at night I wouldn't. Even though that's something that he said. But I feel like during the day I feel much safer in the woods than a lot of other people would. 40:00
- Yeah I don't know, so your dad really took you guys out
 - o Yeah
- So it was you, your siblings, and your dad
 - o And my mom too. So we would go fishing on the weekends, we would go canoeing, or we go to the woods. My dad, he's also a hunter. He's grown up always comfortable in the woods. So that's kind of opened a new element in nature too. Because I feel like a lot of people don't think...like hunters appreciate nature, but my dad has such an appreciation for nature. So when he feels like when he does go to hunting, he's able to takes

something from nature and harvests something, and he thinks of it like a gift, rather than just a sport. Which I think is an important mentality to have and I think that people underestimate how much hunters have actually influenced conservation effort, like majority, like a lot of conservation efforts have been started by hunters, because they're the ones out there who appreciate nature, they're the ones who notice when populations of certain animals are decreasing or increasing and they help regulate that, so he's always been out in nature so I think that's why he's wanted us to do the same.

- So you're pretty close with your dad.
 - o I think my whole family's very close. My mom and dad have always been close and I look up to them a lot. And I have an older sister, who I was talking about, and a younger brother. We've always done things together in nature, and my dad has pushed us to take trips that involve the natural world, just like staying in hotels. We took a trip to Costa Rica, and we stayed in the rainforest and a bungalow type of resort and went through the cloud forests, went zip lining and we've done some adventure things and we also took the trip to Yellowstone and we took trips to Greece and Istanbul, and while we were there we went snorkeling and hiking and we did a lot of things that involved nature.
- So it's always been there
 - o It's always been there
- It's also a consistent family thing that you do.
 - o It's something that we definitely bond over. My mom is definitely more of an indoor person. She loves learning about natural things but staying indoor. She's a zoology major so she still loves science and learning about animals and nature, and she taught high-school biology so she likes that, but she likes being inside. Doing more like lab work kind stuff. Our vacations push her to the edge, but she's still glad that we do them. And my sister's the same way. It pushes her. And me and my brother are like, let's do it, let's go do it kind of thing. We always know that we're going to have a good time.
- It's you, brother, and your dad who are kind of more outdoorsy
 - o Yeah, definitely
- And something else you were talking about, if people have past experiences being out there, and comfortable, they might have more appreciation for nature now. Was there ever a time when you were getting into it, when you weren't that comfortable with it?
 - o I think ever since I was two, I was outside. There was always a level of comfort there. But there's definitely been experiences when things happen

that are unfamiliar when I thought I was outside of my comfort level, like snorkeling for instance, I didn't grow up swimming in the ocean, I was swimming in lakes and I never was used to being in the ocean, so that was something that made me nervous, because it wasn't something that was comfortable. But then once I adapted to it, and got used to it, I loved it. But that was definitely something like an example of a time when I felt uncomfortable. And then another time in yellow stone, I loved I felt comfortable in the woods, out in the snow, and being out in nature, but there was two times, instances, when we got really close to bison. And I've never been around animals that are that large, unless they're like fenced in a zoo, and these animals were free-roaming and I heard stories of people being charged by buffalo or bison, so we stocked on the road and we were very very close to the animals and there was nothing separating us from them. And one of the bull bison, started to walk down to the road, and started to get closer and kind of had it's head down, and there was nothing we could do. That was a time when I felt very very vulnerable and it started to get closer and it shook it's head and went away. So it was one of those like phew, but afterwards I felt good because it was invigorating, but during it, I was like, oh my god I'm going to die, kind of thing. So I think it's important for people to appreciate nature but also understand the power that it has. I kind of enjoyed the feeling of being out of control and being overpowered by nature, not during it, but afterwards.

- Yeah, and it wasn't about kind of like wanting to be attacked by a bison or anything like that, but just the sheer contact of being so close
 - o Yeah that was an example of one of my uncomfortable experiences.
- It almost sounds like you've been loving nature pretty much your whole life, but it's also this upward slope of going through lots of experiences that are sometimes uncomfortable, then you get through it, and it spikes even more
 - o Right I feel like my knowledge is always building, I've like learned things in all of my biology classes, and my science class, and I feel like my real world experiences with those have elevated my knowledge so much more. So everything kind of builds. I think if I just had my experiences in nature and didn't know sort of the science behind it, I wouldn't have appreciated it as much and If I just took classes I wouldn't have appreciated it as much as I like being able to experience, so I think it's important to have both. They kind of intertwine and build off of each other.
- I forgot about how those studying, those studies kind of play a significant role in your love for nature, and definitely with majoring sustainability too, it sounds that love and that academic passion is all

- It's all intertwined, yeah
- Cool. Let me see if I need to ask anything else, I got carried away. 47:12. Ok yeah, I think definitely every topic is touched on is what I wanted to ask. I guess one another thing I want to hear more of, is the last thing we were talking about studying it. The word science often comes up. It sounds like, in your relationship with nature, knowing how it works is such a, it plays such a big role in that. Could you talk more about that?
 - Sure. Again it goes back to my experiences and growing up and stuff, like my mom, since she was a zoology major, and she taught high-school biology, she knows a lot about the science and has an appreciation for that. My dad is also very good at identifying species and understanding that stuff. So whenever I was out in nature, my parents were always teaching me at the same time. So it wasn't just like we were out, fooling around, they were always like that's a blue heron, and this is this kinda fish, and they eat that because and rain comes because...so there was always a because and an explanation, so I always loved like being able to be out in nature so I could understand and know what was happening and what was going on, and being able to talk about it with other people. People are always kinda impressed, ill be outside and ill be like oh hey there's a great blue herring, then they're like how the heck do you know what that is. And I was like, I couldn't even tell you where I learned it, there was just stuff that I just know and I don't even know who I learned it from or where learned it because I've been accumulating knowledge my whole life. I think that any time that you can know enough about something to share it, it kind of makes you passionate. I'm sure the stuff that you specialize and learning in you're really passionate about talking about it, I think that everyone is that way. The more I know about it, the more I want to talk about it, and the more I want to experience it.
- That's awesome, it's also awesome that this is your academic career and this is what you plan to graduate [university] with, and that's awesome that you found what you are passionate with and enjoy studying
 - Exactly
- Cool do you know where from here in terms of your career, what you want to do?
 - Um oh god, kind of. I love options. And so I've kind bounced back and forth deciding what I want to do. Kind of originally when I thought of pairing sustainability and psychology I would maybe want to pursue environmental or conservational psychology, which would mean that I would probably be involved in research or involved in consulting either an environmental agency or maybe like a zoo or something that isn't involved in the natural world and involved in sustainable practices, that

would need my help as a psychologist to get other humans involved or to change human psychology whether it's in a company or an agency or you know, whether it's the visitors to the zoo, how do we get them to actually recycle, how do we get them to really appreciate animals, so kind of like the psychology behind how humans interact with nature. And then another aspect to human psychology is how we can alter our environment or how we can preserve nature in order to help human psychology. So why having natural parks is important for psychology, the value for that, and the value it can have on how we go about our daily lives and how it influences our mood and our happiness. And then if I did pursue that, I would definitely go to grad school, and dive into research, I haven't really decided if research is what I want to do, if I want to work in an academic setting, or if I'd rather maybe go into industrial organization psychology and work as an IO psychologist, but maybe for an environment agency or environmental company. So that I can still surround myself with people who are passionate about nature, but more at a management level or more at a communication level because I do like interacting with people as well

- Gotcha cool. I definitely wasn't expecting you to have a clear path. It sounds like having nature in your career, as a career, that's a solid thing in your mind.
 - o I think so too. I think that the biggest decision I have to make is, if I do go to grad school, if I want to work in the corporate world in the company or in business, or if I would rather work in research. Kind of like learning more and studying more.
- It sounds like you enjoy both of them.
 - o Yes. And with a marketing minor, I had a marketing sustainability internship over winter term and I feel like I was surprised by how much I liked it, because the job did require me to sit at a desk all day, and do stuff on the computer. But I was doing creative things. So I definitely think that if I do have a job, or if I'm indoors all day, and doing that kind of stuff all day, then I want to be able to do something creative. Because that is also something that kind of a passion of mine, being able to do creative things. So if I don't have the opportunity to work outdoors, I think that I want to be learning about it, or working towards that goal, or doing something with creativity.
- Yeah that's actually something that's really interesting, because like kind of being the cubicle doing your shift every day, that almost sounds like what we talked about before with things being predictable, and kind of not having that unpredictable, cyclical but, unpredictable things in nature. I feel like that creativity plays a big role in getting you through that business/corporate

- I think that my dream would be to have a job that's flexible enough that I can kind of pick and choose when I want to be inside vs. when I want to be outside. I think this might come from my dad reiterating this, but he works, he owns a company, so he's in his office, from 8am to 6 everyday, Monday to Friday. He always wishes that he could be in the office when the weather is bad, and outside when the weather is good, and it didn't matter if it was Saturday or Wednesday, he wishes that he could maximize his time outdoors so that he is outside, he has the best experience outside, and when he's inside, he doesn't feel trapped because he would, you know, it makes sense to be inside when the weather and outside when the weather is good. I think having that flexibility in life would be really rewarding, because I feel like I would get the most out of my time outdoors and most out of my time indoors.
- Cool, and also creativity, I wanted to hear more about, you said you liked being creative, how did that happen in the past, in terms of being creative
 - I think I've always been the kind of person that likes objects and concrete things and seeing things, and I think that's why I like systems so much, because I can see a diagram, and I can like physically, physically when I can see something and see how it works, I always respond better. I'm a very visual person. And so I think that having the visual aspect to creativity is really important for me. I feel good when I produce something and make something. And look at what I've done. To start from raw materials and make something I feel like is very rewarding, even when it is digital and on a computer I feel like I'm creating something and I've always just like get excited when I am able to be creative and have flexibility, you know make something I can be proud of.
- Cool what kind of things have you created?
 - I regret not taking art classes in high school. Or design classes I took a core class and didn't have room in my schedule to take art classes. But I took photography and I love photography. That's always something that I enjoy because I can look back at my work and remember that moment that I was in. then I've also started taking, I'm in an architecture class right now, which is actually technically supposed to be just for architecture majors, because it is studio class. And we're actually producing things and making stuff. And I'm kind of out of my element because there's a lot that I don't know, because I'm with a lot of majors. So we're learning about landscape architecture. It's something that I've always been interested in so I've really wanted to take the class and it does count towards my sustainability major so I'm taking it, and it's landscape architecture so it's how buildings relate to their site, and how it's important that a building

interacts with the site and the environment that it's in, whether it's a natural environment, a built environment, and how implementing natural materials into a building in a natural environment could benefit aesthetics and appearance of the building, and how our built environment interacts with the natural world. So it's kind of another connection for me with humans and nature, because it's like how the buildings we built build, shape the environment that we are in, so what we got to do is we got to select a site on western campus that we would potentially build on, and what we had to do was represent that site, in a collage format so it was kind of creative abstract interpretation of that site, and the elements, the dimension, the scale, the colors, the sight, the sound, every aspect of the site we had to represent it in a physical collage. And so I've spent all last week staying up until 2 am in the studio making this collage, and I used materials from campus, and I was able to create this representation of the site that we are maybe eventually going to build on and then we also had to do a collage that represented a poem that we read in class. And that poem had a lot of natural simple elements to it. So we had to represent the poem and we had to write a paper that compared the poem and the site and the collages and how they interact.

- Wow that's awesome.
 - o So it was a really cool project. And a lot of the people in the major, they know how to make everything, and they have the materials and they know a lot about it, so I had to start from scratch. But I am taking the class because it's stuff that I really want to learn and what I really want to talk about. And so yeah, that's an example of me being creative, and being able to use my creativity
- Awesome. It sounds like that's also a version of what I wanted to do with being creative, and seeing how that creative process adds to that, or affects how you feel about nature. Has working on the landscape architecture project, or the poem project, has that affected you in how you feel about nature?
 - o I think that maybe made feel very good. I learned that I love being able to sketch natural scenes. I always have, that's always something that I've always been good at. Sketching. I've had trouble sketching man-made structures. And there's something freeing about making natural sketches because it doesn't have to be perfect, and I could even my sketchbook...showing sketchbook...so like everyday in class, instead of taking notes, he wants us to sketch things, and it could be anything that we get out of class. And so one of the poems that we read, it reminded me of Greece; I took photographs of doors in Greece. I think I have some examples in here...[showing sketchbook]...I love these doors because

they represented something that was man-made but then they had something natural behind it. And these were like doors to nowhere in a sense. So they were an example of how humans have obscured their environment for no reason. Each one of these doors just are a short wall that you can easily climb over or you can easily get around. This one for example, this is just a cliff behind it; it looked like it was a door to nowhere. And that kind of spoke to me...

- Was that something intentional that they made, or like something that accidentally happened?
 - o It was something that was intentional, but kind of unnecessary. So I think it was interesting for me to analyze how we shape our environment, and whether certain things have purpose and certain things don't
- And that was an example of something that doesn't have a purpose
 - o Right. And the poem that we read, the whole idea behind that poem, is that a poem is just a poem, and that we try to interpret it to be something that it's not, and we should just let it be. So I thought that had a strong relationship to how we are constantly trying to change things and intervene with the natural world, when we really should sometimes just let it be. This is the representation, a creative representation of the natural lines of the earth, and the layers of the earth, and how those lines continue, despite the fact that we try to interrupt them. Or build an environment.
- That's fascinating
 - o So that was kind of my idea of the poem. And then this is just like, this is like our site on western campus. And like how the natural elements interact with like natural ones. So it's like an idea of a structure that's very natural, it appears to be like a tree, in the environment, and we should be working towards making our built environment seem more natural and how that might help us.
- That's amazing
 - o All of our notes are just sketching like segment [???]. So yeah I feel like it's been very rewarding to sketch these things in class. But I do like drawing more natural things.
- Cool. Awesome thank you so much, that's really fascinating.
 - o So that's another example of how nature has influenced me and my creativity.
- Cool. Um so that's awesome thank you so much. So for everything that you shared today. I don't have any thing else to ask today, but is there anything you want to add?

- I feel like I shared a lot so I don't think there's anything specific. I'm sure things will come up throughout the project, that we'll talk about, but I think I'm good.

Miriam Second Interview

- I'm going to start by asking you how the experience was making the movie
 - It was great. It was, besides a few technical difficulties I feel I got a lot out of making the video. Because I was able to think about it, and it's always good to express myself creatively. I get more out of it than writing a paper or writing out a response or something, being able to actually make something helps, make it real. Then I was also able to share it with others. It was kind of fun to be able to share something that you made with other people so overall I thought it was a good experience.
- That's awesome. Who did you share it with?
 - I shared it with some of my friends at school. Then I'm planning on sharing it with family now that I'm back with home, I haven't yet, but I know that they will like seeing it a lot. Because they were some of the ones in the video. Well they were the ones in the video. And I think that since they shared their experience with me, they get a lot more out of it than just my friends watching it. But I got positive feedback from my friends who watched it too.
- That's awesome. That must've been a lot of fun sharing it with people and getting positive feedback.
 - Yeah it was. It was great
- That's really good to hear. I definitely enjoyed watching your video. It was just beautiful. With all the sites that you've been to. So I know there was a couple of things, I kind of want to pick your brains I guess on how you, what made you choose to do it this way or that way
 - Sure
- So the first thing I noticed was, there was a lot of snow in the video. And I think that wasn't just yellow stone, but also as you were taking footages of you walking. There was snow. Was a conscious decision on your part?
 - It was. It was also the time of year that I was filming at the beginning. But kind of from the beginning I always had in mind that I wanted there to be snow on the ground on campus, because of my experience in yellow stone where everything was snow. And that was just kind of one aspect that I wanted to compare the two and have some similarities. And the only contrast was just the place vs the environment. And how you know it can snow in [hometown] oh and it could snow in yellow stone, and it still impacts me the same way. So that's why the video's title is here and there.

Because it's...I bring my experiences in yellow stone national park, I can bring back to school with me. And now that I've seen snow there, and experienced snow there and experienced that how there's five feet of snow everywhere, snowmobiling through the park and all the animals that are living in the snow and how the snow in [hometown] can remind me of the experience. I can kind of reflect on both simultaneously.

- Was it the act of making the video and editing them together that made you put them together?
 - o I think so. It was the video that helped me bring it together. But I remember even before making the video, the first snow in [hometown] I was really excited. Once we got back from Xmas break, because that's when it was after the trip, because it could remind me of my trip to yellow stone and made me appreciate the snow even more. And I like the snow more rather than it being something frustrating it was something that was fun. So yeah, I think it was something that, making the video heightened the connection but it was already kind of there.
- So it was present. It wasn't like it was the first time you put them together, but definitely it enhanced the similarities.
 - o Yes.
- Cool. And also speaking of snow, I'm thinking of the contrast between like all the way up until the very last scene where it's you walking on campus, and it's this no snow, it actually it looks like spring time. Was that also something that you made a conscious decision about?
 - o That was intentional. I really wanted to show by doing that the way that the changes of weather affects me and how that's a natural phenomenon. It kind of affects everyone's mood and how the snows exciting, but after all that, it kind of and I took the footage as the very end of the year, I was actually took the footage and added it the last week of school
- Oh ok
 - o So it was when everyone was happy to be outside, dressed in t-shirts, people were in the quad, and how the warm weather really affects people, and how it changes people's moods. And so it kind of went from more somber winter kind of mood and then at the end to like open it up and have it be spring. I felt it was kind of a nice twist ending
- Yeah absolutely
 - o Because it's unexpected, you know, you're seeing snow snow snow, and even now I was on campus and everything was sunny and green, to look at pictures and videos of it snowing on campus, made me do a double take, because you get so used to whatever weather it is that you forget that that one place can be a totally different world depending on what season it is.

And it's kind of what I wanted to show, that nature has such an impact on the space. It has an impact on me, because I feel differently when I'm walking in the snow than in the spring time

- And the contrast is really sharp, when you watch it in a five minute video, because basically the whole 5 minutes of it is snow, but the last 30 seconds of it is spring. So like you said it's a nice twist in to a different world.
 - o Right
- Kind of like the same question as before, after you made that twist, was there something that you thought differently or did it cause any changes in how you see seasonal change?
 - o I think that I've always loved the changes in the season, so if anything with connection with the snow, on campus, and YS, it just heightened the connection for me. Because for me to be able to see it on video, realize the contrast, side-by-side from the snow to spring, you don't get that in real life, it's always a gradual change. And the change of seasons is always exciting for me. So to be able to see it instantly on video, definitely heightened that kind of experience for me.
- That makes sense. Gotcha cool. Some of the editing was really interesting. I don't know was intentional, there was little comma-seconds of footages, maybe I can show it to you but maybe you know what I'm talking about,
 - o That was kind of ...it happened and didn't mean for it to happen. And then looking back, I kind of like having that, because there was certain instance of the strip where you know you think a thought, and it would be there. And you had to really pay attention to see it and the average person would catch it necessary but when you're really looking closely, you'd be able to see it. And so those were kind of random and they weren't intentional at first, but then once I thought about it I was like woo I kind of like that. Because you had to be paying attention to truly appreciate it. And so I think I kept those in there because I wanted it to be kind of something you had to focus on
- Yeah it was very subliminal and I was trying to pause at the right second to see what you were, you know, what you had on that comma second moment. And sometimes like you said, when you let it go, you'll have this flash image of something completely different, and that makes sense with what you're saying about sometimes your thoughts meander and wander to something completely different even as you're anticipating doing the next, I don't if that reflected what you were saying
 - o I think that's definitely true. When you are in nature, you can all of a sudden think of something else and come back and there's always something I don't know, I feel like it simulates your mind and you have to

- be sharp in nature to be aware of what's changed, because an animal could run by and something can quickly change. And there's always something going on around you so to be able to recognize that is a gift
- Kind of going back to the video form, it doesn't like it's something that's possible with, like a paper or something. Like you can't just jump, put a random sentence right? But also if it's in like a novel, it'd be weird to have that really flash sentence between...
 - o And you'd always see it, whereas in a video, you won't see it, and not everyone can catch that.
 - Cool. And I like what you said about at first you didn't, it wasn't something intentional. It was something... I don't know how you got to it but...
 - o Well some of the videos have been connected together, because I have connected those videos before, just to be able to share with other some of the footages I have taken. So when I cut the videos, sometimes the end of one video was on it. And I think that that's why there's that random slip, because when I originally connected the video after the videos my family and friends and stuff, I didn't compile them with music or anything, but I compiled the videos back to back. And I used that kind of megavideo, so I think that's how that happened.
 - So it wasn't intentional at first, but you intentionally left it there.
 - o Yeah
 - I really like that it, because it sounds like a, I don't know if I'm exaggerating, but it was a realization that "oh this does fit!"
 - o Right
 - Also, while I was watching it, there were some of the sceneries were, first of all beautiful, the whole mountains and the snow and the water and all of that was really visually striking. There were some blunt appearances of the bison, I was like ohh that's a bison right there! That was a bison right?
 - o Yeah that was bison
 - What were your thoughts about putting those animals in there?
 - o I feel like that was very important for the video because it was so much of my experience in Yellowstone and I mean I feel like that could be just any other place with the bison, it was so unique to the area that everyone has seen a nature scene on TV and maybe seen it but it's not on TV too. But to be able to see it too, oh my god it's right there, I feel like that's one of those experiences that's like wow, and I will forever remember being close to a bison to a trip and now it's something that's impact because that was probably the point when I felt the most vulnerable with the bison because our guides told us how dangerous they can be, and they can charge at any moment, and there's been more deaths in Yellowstone caused by bison

- than it happens by bears and other predators. And bison aren't even predators because they are just very defense. So to get that snippet of how close we were like especially on some of the passage ways that we took on snowmobiles. That's why I wanted to put it there, because it's a wow factor
- Yes, it is a wow factor. It was like you said, it kind of came out of nowhere right? And I was like wow she really was this close to the bison. I like what you said about it was also about showing it to other people, because other people can also see how close you were. It sounds like it was your intention to share your experience with people who weren't even there.
 - o Right
 - Cool. And not just the bison, but, some of the other things, at first, it seems maybe normal, but then I realized it wasn't, like the usual sight when there was smoke coming out.
 - o The geysers. Yeah, that's unique to Yellowstone as well. The whole park is a giant caldera, which is basically a volcano, one single volcano that erupted hundreds and thousands of years ago, and left this big giant basin and the whole park is one big basin, and so it's a hot spot where magma comes close to the surface, so the water sources are heated by the magma and it causes the hot springs, so there's geothermal features all throughout the park and I wanted to make sure that I pinpointed that, because that's what makes the park alive. Through the harsh winter. If this park did not have the geothermal feature, then all of the water in the park will freeze over in the winter, and so much of the ecosystem and so many of the animals rely on the water flowing, because if the water is flowing the fish can come through so then you know there's lots of animals that eat the fish, there's bald eagles, and basically everything in the park survives off of whoever's there. And so for them to be flowing through the winter is what allows them to stay alive and what allows any animals to stay alive in the world so that's why I wanted to focus in the park. And that was one of the highlights of the park was seeing all the geothermal features, because there are vast flats of hydrothermal vents, and bacteria field with their real bright colors of water, and the waters over 200 degrees, but its negative 20 degrees outside, so it's amazing that, it was another example of how I felt nature was so much more powerful than I was.
 - It's something larger than us, something larger than who you are
 - o And geologists don't know when Yellowstone is going to erupt again. So that's another reason why I was kind of overpowered by nature, because it could erupt at any point
 - And that word overpowering is, not in a bad way, I guess in a humble way, it makes you humble. That's the feeling I'm getting when I'm listening to you.

Where there's the bison and it makes you humble. There's the geyser and you realize magma is flowing and it could erupt, and you don't know when it's going to erupt and all of that, comfortable is not exactly the right word.

- Well I think nature has the power that makes you vulnerable and humble, but it also has the power of bringing comfort and relaxation, and I wanted to show both of that, and I feel like I did. Because it had a good balance of me just strolling through, or me just overwhelmed by it, or me just sitting by the river and watching it flow. And so it was kind of that balance and that contrast. Or me being out skiing and pushing that limit's kind of thing. So it was all kinds of emotions evoked through the video and through nature
- So feeling of vulnerable and humble, and what other emotions?
 - I think that feeling vulnerable, feeling humble, feeling relaxed and comforted, feeling like I was experiencing things that I've never experienced, so it was new. It was stimulating, it was something memorable, something I will remember forever. And it was just over all put me on a high in terms of how I felt more positive and happy and I felt good doing those things, and I felt good when I'm watching the video and overall it makes me happy
- And it sounds like being able to re-experience that is the benefit of ...
 - Making the video, for sure.
- I want to ask you about what the purposes were in making the video. Of course it's because I asked you to, but what were some of the purposes in making this kind of film? Did you have any?
 - I kind of knew that I wanted it to be something that ...I feel like it was exciting at times, but it was thought provoking at others. A lot of the videos nowadays are just supposed to be just exciting and be thrilling and be entertaining, and I wasn't so focused on trying to entertain other people as much as I was to kind of be thought-provoking. And if I was making it more entertaining video to the average person, I would try to make it more exciting and probably make it shorter... because peoples attention span is usually only about 2 minutes for a video, so 5 minutes is actually a long video for someone who is watching it for entertainment purposes. But for someone who wants to think and who wanted to focus, I feel like this is the kind of video for them.
- So you wanted provoke thought to people
 - Mhmhhh. And for myself. So that it's something that I could go back and watch it again and remember experiences. I could watch it fifteen years from now and all those emotions could come back when I was there. I think they are the major reasons.

- Right, as you tried to make it what it is, did you try to capture the trip going to YS, or did you try to capture what it's like in nature, or did you have an overall point that you wanted to get across to people?
 - o I think the over all point, it was important for me to intro with me walking on campus, kind of like homebase. I repeated that video when the song repeated, I don't know if you noticed that.
- Yes I noticed that
 - o And kind of that movement and routine, and then going on vacation breaks you out of that routine and that's why I was walking on campus and all of a sudden I was walking in Yellowstone, and that's how the video introduced from the beginning so I have my boots on and I am in campus moving and then I have my boots on in Yellowstone and I was walking and they kind of blended together, and then you can see kind of like the geysers in the distance and the surrounding scenery and then as the music sped up, then I was going on the snowmobile and going really fast, so it was supposed to start at home and then build, and you saw the airplane taking off, and my family driving through the mountains and that was on the way to the park ,and then being there and experiencing it and always being able to fall back on me just walking through campus and kind of thinking about it, I don't know if that makes sense but, I always wanted to make sure that I always came back to me walking on campus, and then you know thinking about those experiences, and then finishing up on campus in the spring was kind of like the twist in the end, and how despite the seasons and despite the similarities between winter in [collegetown] and winter in YS, even the spring time opens up a whole door of experiences. A potential extension to the video could be me being in Yellowstone during the summer time and you know it's a totally different world all over again and I always thought that way, so I always just wanted to kind of bring it home in the video and that was the theme throughout
- Ok that makes sense, it's kind of like the perfect circle. If not a circle, it's a round trip of taking off and going on vacation, taking a break from usual things...
 - o The usual routine of going to classes every day. And I feel like at school I'm in that routine, and from that routine I break free, and then to come back, and then when I go back to that routine I have a new perspective, and all of a sudden that routine is different even though it feels the same way
- Yeah, and actually I remember talking about that with you in our first interview, where one of things about nature is that it's kind of like breaking out of that routine, it sounds like that was really captured in the video

- Yes, I think so for sure
- The song choice. I didn't know the song before, I don't know if it's a famous song, I don't know if I should know
 - I don't know if it's really popular, it's always been a good song and I picked it less for the lyrics and more for the song itself and the music and the mood that it provokes and the change of pace that it has, but then it always fall back to the same repetition so I was focused more on the music and less on the lyrics,
- Right, would you have gotten rid of...like the lyrics have zero relevance?
 - No I don't think it had zero relevance, I think that, I kind of want to look at the lyrics again, just so I can quote it and relate to it again. It was kind of ironic because it says no way no way I don't ever want to talk about it, so it was the irony of that, and how I do want to talk about it and share my experiences, and it was kind of the reflection of a lot of people, you know, a lot of people can take trips and a lot of people are in their routine, but then when they are in their routine, They don't really want to talk about it, but being able to escape allows you to talk about it. And allows you to break free from that routine, where you kind of like I don't want to talk about it, no no no, and then all of a sudden the music goes up and you're free and you fall back into it again. So it was definitely more about the music and less about the song. But I originally got the song from, I don't know if you've seen the documentary, art of light?
- Nuh-uh
 - Well it's sponsored by redbull, but it's a video of snowboarders that just do these insane tracks in mountains, they go to Patagonia, they go to the alps, they go to all of these mountain ranges and experiences nature in it's full effect and again it's all snow, all everything, so I pulled that song from that movie actually, that's when I was first introduced to that song. And after watching the movie, and hearing that song, now whenever I listened to that song I imagine myself in the wild with snow, and so that was the original connection. So when I thought about my trip to Yellowstone I couldn't help but think of the documentary, and so that was the biggest inspiration, that's the biggest reason for the use of the song. Because for me, that song automatically makes me think of nature, and mountains, and tress, and snow, and everything that is embodied by those feelings.
- That's really interesting, so all of this happened before I was asking you to make a movie about it, you connecting the song, with nature. That wasn't something you decided as you were making it

- Yeah it was definitely something that was prior. I kind of always thought that I would use that song, and I took the footage and then I wanted to see if the footage fit in with it, and it did.
- It also sounded like as you were there, that was kind of playing in the background of your head. It was kind of always playing.
 - Yes, that's right
- The movie is an interesting format, because you were able to put them together.
 - Yes
- Also, what you said about the acceleration, the change of pace, that also fit's with what you were saying about the trip, where you...
 - Yes, there was a change of pace
- Exactly. Was that something you noticed before the project, or during the project?
 - I think it was something that I...like from the beginning, I always wanted Before I even made the video, I knew I wanted to do a video of my feet walking around the campus, and my feet in Yellowstone and kind of going back and forth and then have it build up and then, and so I knew that I want it to build up at some point and come back home and that's why this song was really fitting, and so I had that intent from the beginning
- And it worked out really nicely
 - Good
- So family, I wanted to talk about. They are the only characters, not characters, but the only people who are prominently feature. What were your thoughts behind that?
 - I originally didn't want to show anyone's face, but I ended up including a clip my brothers and that's his face, on the snowmobile. I think that I didn't want people to be in it at first, because I kind of wanted it to be something that was just thought provoking and shared with others and that anyone could relate to. And then I realized that it really wasn't something that anyone could relate to at the same level as me, because my family was there, and because it was an experience that I shared with them. And they were a really important part of my experience, and I didn't want to completely exclude them. And I knew that the purpose of the project was to tie in how something in nature, or not human, affected my feelings towards the world, but I thought it was almost impossible to exclude human influence. Because they were a really big part of my experience and I think that had I been there alone, I would've gotten a completely different experience compared to if I went with them. I think I still would've gotten a lot out of it, but not having that ability to share that experience with them in real life would've changed how it kind of affected me long term I think. And it affected my relationship with them. Because I

felt my relationship with them was built up even more. I'm already close to my family but every time we can take a vacation together we always get so much closer.

- Yeah and it sounds like the whole trip definitely brought you guys together.
 - o I think so
- That's really interesting how you changed your thought from just making a more generic video about nature in YS, but then feeling like it wouldn't be authentic to your experience if you had excluded them, and eventually put them back in. so one of the things I was curious about was, as you made the film, you might have touched on it already, what were some of the moments that you liked as you were making this film?
 - o I really liked the transition between me walking in campus and me walking in Yellowstone. And then also I really liked the change of pace, that was really important, the points leading up until the moment where the music all of a sudden sped up, and kind of makes you go wow, kind of thing. I think those are the points that I really wanted to focus on. And then also, I didn't focus a ton on the very very end. I wanted it to just fade off and leave room for thought, so it didn't have some big spectacular ending like some videos do, so it was intentional that it just kind of fizzled out, like the camera angle just went random, almost, just to leave people thinking more and thought-provoking and to be thinking more and always kind of experiences, I feel like I'm always thinking, I'm always kind of lost in the moment and thinking about things and so to kind of have it fade off was important
- It wasn't like a climactic ending, it was a resolution
 - o Exactly
- So those are some of your favorite moments in the film.
 - o Well I mean I like it all. It's hard to pick a favorite moment. Some of my favorite footage was definitely some of the...towards the beginning there's a river that's flowing kind of constantly, and more in the middle there is the river that's heavily flowing, there's rapids going by, that was a probably one of my favorite scenes from the whole trip, was that moment. And so that footage is some of my favorites, and also the snowmobile. And just The vision of trees going mile and mile and miles
- That was beautiful
 - o It's hard for me to pick a favorite. I liked it all
- What was some of your favorite moments in making the film, as opposed to what was in film
 - o I think making the film, my favorite part was taking the footage that I knew that I already had and putting it to the music and just seeing how it

changed. Because I feel like videos, this video without the music wouldn't have the same impact and the same effect if it didn't have the music. And so I made some videos in the past, and nothing likes this but, but it's always fun to put footage to the song, and see how it unfolds, because sometimes I would just throw the song in there and the music would go perfectly with the video, and then sometimes it wouldn't so I would have to nit-pick it a little, but when it would go perfectly I think I got excited.

- Oh cool, so that aha moment where it does go together.
 - o Yeah
- What were some of the challenging moments?
 - o I think it was challenging to get it to capture really everything because so much of the trip is stuff that can't be really caught on camera, so trying to invoke the same emotions and same feelings that I get to other people is the most challenging, and I think that goes for any video really, because a video, it reminds you of it, but it's not the same things as really being there. And so much of nature is being there, hearing the sounds, experiencing it, and feelings and change of temperature and so I'm hoping that the video invokes those feelings, but obviously it can't recreate it so I think it was frustrating making it, and being like oh I wish someone watching it could really feel what I was feeling in the moment. And then I wish that technically speaking, I wish that the quality was clearer, I think that if I did it with better software, that would've helped, but I still think it gets the job done.
- Yeah absolutely, I personally didn't feel like it needed to be, I'm sure it would've looked greater I guess, but I didn't feel dissatisfied
 - o Right yeah
- So how about this question: what new thing did you learn about yourself by working on this project
 - o I think I learned that I like making videos first of all
- It wasn't your first time right?
 - o It wasn't my first time, I've made videos just like goofing around with my friends before, and putting them with music, and I've done projects in class, but nothing with footage that really means something to me. And so I think that since it did mean something to me, I did get something out of it personally and it reminded me of those experiences. I haven't looked back at those videos in a while. So for me to watch some of it, I was like oh yeah, I totally would have forgotten about that experience you know, in that place in the park, so it was really rewarding for me to be able to look back on those, and to have good reasons to look back on them and compile them. Because a bunch of videos are in a folder somewhere, it wouldn't be

- likely that I would go back and watch them all again but having just a 5 minute video that I could show other people and I could go back on, I feel very rewarded that I have that and I created it and that it's mine, and I always have that and I could go back and watch it whenever I want
- That must've been cool to show it to your friends. Do you remember what their reactions were?
 - o They really liked it. They thought it was really cool they didn't have any...they didn't analyze it or have specific feedback but overall they were like oh that was really cool kind of thing
 - Yeah cause I remember in our first interview you were talking about how you were the "nature one" or you're someone who really likes nature...do you think it had an effect on them to appreciate nature more by showing it to them?
 - o I think they understood me more and my experiences because a lot of them knew that I went on a trip like this, but they didn't know that I had experienced those things, and been that close to the bison, and then done all that with my family so I was able to share a piece of myself through the video that I wouldn't have been able just by explaining it...so to be able to have video footage of my experiences and share it with them is rewarding because it's like "ohh they know, they kind of like know what I've done and what I've seen and how I think" so being able to share it through the video I feel like is better than having a conversation
 - That makes sense I realize it might have been a leading question but I really like the way you answer it, because it wasn't like "hey nature is great" kind of video. It does have that message but it wasn't about you should like nature more, but it was more about understanding you better.
 - o Right and I do think that certain people get stuff out of nature that other people don't like, having prior appreciation for nature allows you to get a lot more out of it than someone who feels uncomfortable in those situations and like maybe some of my friends who weren't exposed to things growing up they wouldn't appreciate being there so much but they still can appreciate it on the video and they understand why I appreciate it and I think that's more important than telling them that they should appreciate it and go out and do things
 - That makes sense it's a little piece of your memory that you could share
 - o But I did bring it home. I wanted nature to feel familiar to people when they watched it, that's why I used the footage from campus, because all of my friends that saw it, understood, because they remembered that snow, and they were like it even snows here, because they are in like summer mode spring mode, and when it brought it back to the end, they were like that looks familiar kind of thing oh that it looks really cool how you did

- that kind of thing I feel like a lot of people on campus don't take the time to look around and see how pretty it is, and so when all of a sudden it's kind slowed down in the video and music and it's reflective, then people on campus can be like wow that's really cool and I should take a minute to stop and smell the roses because it really is an amazing place
- So it's like a gentle reminder. It's not like there's this crazy awesome place like Yellowstone that you could go to...
 - o You can experience things here that have the same effect as going somewhere far away.
 - Right
 - o If you just like look at the trees or you look at, that's why I wanted to pan up at the trees because a lot o people are walking looking forward, looking down at their phones and the don't think to stop and actually look up and I always love looking up because it's like something that I don't usually get to see, and it's a view that a lot of people don't think to look up to see because everyone's looking down at their feet, and that's kind of why the video shows just the feet and taking the time to actually look up and see things
 - That's fascinating. So there's a lot of shooting your feet, which is cool in it's own right because a it shows that you're walking, which is cool in the context of journey, and it's a nice contrast to walking on the foot, to driving, snowmobiling but it's also a commentary that you are walking looking down at your feet
 - o And a lot of people are always looking down and stuck in the same routine and So this video is to be like "hey look up every once in a while and see what's around you and appreciate it", and I have to remind myself to do that too, because a lot of the time I'm looking at my feet, I'm looking down and so that's why I really wanted to start off with [a shot of feet walking on the ground], because that's what a most people are doing and I get stuck doing, and going on a trip forces me to look up, and forces me to look around and enjoy it, and so then when I came back to campus when I'm looking down at my feet I think to look up more and I think to look around, to really experience it.
 - I see so that was your thought behind ending it with that angle of...yeah you were talking it fizzles out it's this anticlimactic but, it's also a change from looking down and then looking up and noticing all of these things
 - o Originally I thought to end it with the footage of me walking in the snow again, just to bring it back home and bring it back to [collegetown] and our daily routine, but then I was like then you're not getting anything out of it, I still wanted to have a different ending so then that's when I ran outside and I decided to walk through it, because that's right by my dorm,

- the footage in the end, my home, I guess, and [collegetown], and I always lived in that quad so I kind of have a connection with it and so I was like, ok I wanted it to be me walking but looking up and really experiencing it, and ending with that, rather than ending with my feet again
- That makes me realize more about the video so that's really cool. So ok. The question is, did your relationship with nature change as a result of making the movie?
 - o I think that it did, it was heightened by being able to look back on it, to reflect on it because whenever I am on campus, and thinking about the video, I think about Yellowstone, so now I automatically connect those two in my mind now, because I've seen it visually paired and I think that a lot of times I get stuck not thinking about it, but when you have to make a video about it, you're forced to think about it, and you're forced to appreciate it. It's not a bad "forced", it's a good "forced." I guess that was not the right word, but just putting it together
 - Right
 - o The nature of making the video makes you think more about what you're seeing and what you're connecting and when you have to make something, then you automatically remember it better, I think
 - I think also just by talking about it, it makes you think about everything else about how you act in your relationship with nature, like if you are taking a footage of you walking, you think about, you have to think about why am I taking this footage?
 - o Right actually taking the footage made me think a lot more about my surroundings too. And nature and what do I want to look at, like what do I appreciate when I walk around? I thought about the trees and I thought about me walking and just the general surroundings
 - That makes a lot of sense. So from here on, as we're done making this project, is there anything that you would do differently, I don't mean things like be nice to nature, or things like that, but generally, do you have new insights or new perspectives about how you want to interact with nature?
 - o I think that I want to take more video footage when I am in nature but then also make sure when I am out in nature, I am looking around and I am enjoying it because that's kind of the whole thing behind my video. Especially when I go to different places because I feel like when you go to different place you're already trying to look around and trying to enjoy it and to really take it all in. especially when I go abroad this summer and as my life continues, to always make sure to have the opportunities to be exposed to nature and make sure to appreciate it, and make sure that I

have the opportunity always share it with it with others, because that's when I get a lot out of it, so that's what I would say

- That makes sense. So the point of this whole thing was yes, we all like nature, we both like nature, not everyone maybe, but at least both of us like nature, so there's the possible scenario, you liked YS, you like nature and you didn't make the video, versus, you went to YS, you liked it, and you made the video. Does making the video add anything to your life?
 - o I think it definitely definitely does. I think it's something that I can watch for the rest of my life, and so always be able to think back on it, and automatically, I'm going to remember those experiences more, because in making the video, I had to replay some clips 10 times, 15 times so they're ingrained in my brain now and I can automatically go to it in my brain and remember and think about it. If I hadn't made the video and hadn't re-seen that footage, I would've never had that, and I would forget some of the experiences that I had. And I wouldn't be thinking about...like now when I step outside, and I look around, I think, "oh that would be cool in the video" you know? I'm always thinking about it, because I made a video. And so I try to capture things in my brain now, instead of just walking through.
- That's awesome. I'm sure you meant everything you said, but it's fine if you're like nah, it didn't do anything, but it sounds like it has
 - o No it definitely did
- Something I was curious about, this is kind off-topic to what were just talking about. It wasn't just Yellowstone and [collegetown], there was high-sky Montana
 - o Oh yeah big sky Montana. And that was a part of that trip. And I know I've been talking a lot about Yellowstone but big sky had the same impact that Yellowstone did on me and they're really close to each other, so they were all part of the same trip so we went snowmobiling in the park for a couple of days and then we also went skiing for a couple of days, and Big sky Montana which is one of the biggest ski resorts in the country, and I mean the mountain ranges are gorgeous and all of the ski runs that go through the trees, and I personally love snow skiing and my family's always grown up snow skiing so that too is an extension of the trip and an extension of how I really want to make sure to look around, and you know, I think snow skiing forces you to pay attention to your surroundings, we have to be aware we have to be paying attention and so to have that footage was important for me to include too. And it was kind of me being on the edge, experiencing nature to it's full potential because it was pushing my limits. And so that's why I wanted to make sure to include the footage

- It sounds like over all, just like we were talking about, understanding yourself more, understanding Miriam more, and for me from my point of view, I feel like I understood you more, and your relationship with nature, because nature to you means being reminded of not just the beauty, but kind of like being pushed, pushing your limit's. There's both comfort and also being vulnerable too so I feel like that's a unique way of appreciating nature. Do you have anything else?
 - o I don't think so.

Alex First Interview

- Do you have an idea of what kind of movie you want to be making?
 - o Uh so there's this stream, do you know Peffer Park is? It's just like in the intersection of chestnut and Patterson you like go right on 27 for a little bit and then turn right. There's like a gazebo and a swing set, and there some little bit's of trails back there.
- Is that the one where it's connected to the trail behind the psychology building?
 - o It is connected to the trail behind the psychology building, it's all connected, the whole natural area, place is connected and there's the path under 27 that connects Peffer park to the...whatever that is, the trails behind Boyd
- So there's the, what's that area...called Bluff
 - o Yeah the Bluffs, behind Peffer park
- Oh yeah, so the swings and the places where people BBQ, ok got it
 - o So there's like the Bluffs, and the streams that the Bluffs overlook and that's like my favorite nature place in [college town]. They're probably better nature places, but I don't know
- But it's your favorite
 - o And it's just like, at least when it's not wet and flooded, because now there's a lot of water there and it's hard to go through it but when it's not super flooded, you can just go from stone to stone, all the way for like a mile, and there's this bridge that has like train tracks over it, and there's like a bunch of graffiti in like the tunnel, just I don't know, it's really
- Yeah that sounds really cool, do you go there a lot?
 - o Maybe once a week. I like getting away from people.
- So you would go there alone?
 - o Yeah, for the most part.
- Do you do anything there, when you're there?
 - o I just look at the graffiti, I take pictures of the graffiti. It's just cool; it's just a really human place.
- A human place

- Yeah, I feel like they make a connection with the place by participating in something, leaving their mark, and I don't know who makes those graffiti, but I assume they're different names,
- ...Different styles?
 - Different styles
- Cool, You don't do graffiti yourself
 - No
- Just to break it down, what you like about it is walking around the area, and also just observing the graffiti, and feeling like this is how people connect with this place, because people are leaving their mark
 - Yeah
- Cool. When did you find out about this place
 - Like last year. Basically this time last year
- Ok how did you find it?
 - Um I just sort of start walking up the stream, basically I was like I wonder where this goes, and I got my feet literally wet, and kept going
- Was it...what was driving you, I guess? Was it like I have nothing better to do so I'm walking, or were you curious
 - I was curious. I was just like, I had already explored most of the natural areas of [university], so I was just like, and I wonder what's over here.
- So this isn't like your...I mean there was this thing about getting the feet wet thing about finding the place for the first time, but it wasn't like your first exposure to the natural area in [collegetown].
 - No, it had to be have been like a month since I started exploring
- What year are you?
 - I'm a senior this year, but I've been here for a while in [collegetown]. I've grown in collegetown.
- You might have guessed this as you chuckled, but my assumption was I wonder if he is new to the area and just starting to explore the area, but no this was you've been here for a while and then you started to explore the area in your senior, or some time around then?
- Basically yeah
- Was that something that you didn't do before?
 - It wasn't something I did before. I've been mostly very solitary, and staying in my house, or on campus and not really exploring nature, or not really thinking of myself as a part of nature. But last year, sort of...discovered nature, and how much it's very beautiful and just like also a good way to get away from people. Which could be a lot sometimes.
- A lot?
 - Just people could be a lot some times

- A lot of?
 - o I'm very introverted, so a lot of stress involved with people sometimes.
- Like socializing or just being around people, talking?
 - o All of that. Can be stressful.
- How did you discover nature?
 - o I had been to the bachelor preserve area, do you know where that is?
- No
 - o So down like 73 a little bit past the stables, there's the sign for like the Dewitt cabin and there's like trails back there and there's like the big pond, so I've been there before in high-school, with my girlfriend in high-school, and we've walked the dogs back then, so that's when I first discovered the area but then I just forgot about it for a while
- Did you have the same reaction when you were walking with the dog during high-school, did you have the realization about nature's beauty?
 - o No it was a lot more about her dog and her, than nature. It was cool, it was fresh air, but it wasn't like...it wasn't the same way
- It feels like when you discovered nature again, it had a very different function, it had a different role, the escape from people part.
 - o Right
- So you had that previous experience of being exposed, what made you want to go back to that last year?
 - o I really don't know, honestly. I'm not sure. I just...well ok, one thing that happened is that the place that I worked moved from...I used to work in Hoyt hall, and now I work in Boyd hall, which is right next to the entrance to the natural area, so it was a lot more convenient to go there.
- Can you think of the first time that you found out...well you didn't find out, but you got curious, do you remember when that was? Not like the high-school time, but last year.
 - o I remember about when it was, but I don't remember about the initial experiences
- Ok, cool. So there was the escape part, and there was the beauty part. Can you break that down for me, what was beautiful, what you liked about it?
 - o Yeah, just trees are very beautiful, they've been there for a long time. And just have withstood all that time, and it's awesome. And the living stuff that's not humans. And it's sort of like you don't realize that time
- Something was invisible before, but you recognize for the first time?
 - o Yeah
- Kind of going through the whole journey of that point and where you are now, with your favorite place, and your graffiti's, it got you started in exploring different areas?
 - o Yeah.

- How much of that have you done, like exploring?
 - o Just like the nature areas around here. I would say I spend 4-5 hours a week in those areas
- That's awesome. Is that 4-5 hours of walking?
 - o Yes primarily walking
- Basically a trail walk that would surmount to the total of 4-5 hours. Is that all you do? Walking?
 - o For the most part, there isn't the whole a lot of good places to stop, so. That's what it appears to me.
- Cool, that's awesome. So what do you think...you might have answered this already, what do you that walk, or just looking at nature, what do you think that does for you?
 - o It relaxes me. Some times I feel like I need to go out and experience nature, instead of just buildings.
- Ok ok.
 - o Yeah it just relaxes me, I get to think.
- Mmhm. Think about?
 - o Just sort through things in my mind that have been going on, the stress of graduating soon, and trying to find the job, and that sort of stuff
- That's pretty stressful, and it could tire you out.
 - o Yeah.
- Is that what happens?
 - o That is basically what happens,
- It definitely has that stress relieving function
 - o Yeah, and it's enjoyable
- Right ok. Yeah. Um, yeah, because you were mentioning about feeling stressed out from graduation stuff as well as, how I'm taking it is, it's not just, it's not a time-specific thing of the stress graduating, like you said, you described yourself as an introvert, and there was this whole thing about being with people that stresses you out.
 - o Yeah, especially the people that I live with, they're not introverts and they're just sort of frustrating some times.
- Are these people your friends?
 - o So when I turned 18, I moved out of my parents' house, and I moved in with my brother and his friend. And I lived with my brother and his friend for like 9 years now, or 8 and a half years. But my brother moved out last year, and then we have 2 other people who are like his friends' friends and I sort of haven't gotten the chance to leave.
- And you wanted to.
 - o And I want to leave. I mean that's going happen anyway.
- Ok, it's not like this hopeless situation of...

- No it's not, it's just frustrating sometimes. They just drink all the time, they talk a lot, they take up space in the middle of the house.
- Yeah it sounds frustrating, that's not the kind of things that you want to do
 - No it's not. What I want to do, so it's frustrating
- Did it get more difficult after your brother left?
 - Not a whole lot, there was another person who came in after he left, which was like, instead of 2 and 2, it was 3 and 1. Like 2 introverts and 2 extroverts. It's 3 and 1 now, and it tilts in favor of introverts
- So you would count your brother as an introvert.
 - Yes
- Are you close to him
 - Not really
- So it was more the comfort from having someone else
 - Someone else who doesn't want to talk
- Got it. So it was kind of overwhelming when there was like, well first, you're the only introvert, and the three other people were more social, more party-loving people.
 - Yeah,
- Got it. That makes sense. So really, the word escape is coming to mind a lot when I'm listening to you. And yes, there's a lot of thing about buildings, but in this case particularly, the building of your apartment, or house, and just kind of feeling like, yeah, I don't want to be here right now
 - Right. Yeah. It is a lot of escape. It is a good word to describe.
- But then again it's escape that's relaxing and escape that's enjoyable
 - Yeah not like running away, but just like getting away
- Ok. Does it help you deal with those stresses after you go back to it?
 - Yeah, it does. It calms me down. And it just sort of makes it easier to deal with everything.
- Yeah you mentioned your brother. I wanted to get an idea of how nature has been a part of your life, if it has. Or, if it hasn't. In your growing up, in your family, were you exposed to, I mean you mentioned walking the dog with your friend, and I don't know where you're from, so that's one question...
 - I'm from [hometown]
- Oh ok. Got it. Sorry I didn't know.
 - No problem.
- Have you lived anywhere else?
 - No
- Was nature a part of your life growing up?
 - Sort of. Not like nature per se, but there was a sort of a small forest behind our house, and then I would be back there with friends. And in the trees and

stuff. But I feel like it's not really like, you're not really in nature unless you're like connecting with it in some way. Um, I mean not that there is a solid line between nature and non-nature, but do you have a point where you're like, ok, I'm getting into nature, as opposed to, nah, not really. It's more of a mindset.

- Ok got it
 - o Like, the recently I've been thinking about like there are like couple of ways to think about [hometown] is to think like a small town with some nature areas around it or is it like us versus the forest with some buildings in it
- That's really interesting, which one do you think it is, or what do you think it is?
 - o I think it really depends. You can pick either one at any given point, depending on what you are focusing on
- Sure
 - o If you are looking at the squirrels, or if you're not looking at the squirrels.
- Gotcha, if you look at the squirrels, it's more like these sets of buildings and this forest.
 - o Yeah
- Um, I don't know...I'm thinking of what it's like right now, as opposed to how you were before. Do you feel like it's more of this forest, do you feel like it's more of a town...I'm not asking a clear cut question, but I guess I'm asking has it changed over the years?
 - o Yeah I think it's my awareness of the value of nature, and wildlife, and animals that are not humans that has increased. I think it's more of a forest than a town. I think it still depends, but.
- Yeah that makes sense. Now because of the topic of town vs. forest is coming up, do you have any feelings about those nature parts being as valued, and there being more artificial. I don't mean anything, but do you ever feel like there should be more nature?
 - o Yeah I do I was kind of sad when they tore down a bunch of trees in the western campus, to build the new residence halls or whatever, and they took some of the trees down by Pepper park to expand the high way
- That was really going on in the past year or two
 - o Those are really just interrupted right now, because the path under 27 is obstructed with rocks right now so it's kind of like segments, the two areas, before it was like one long path where you can go from one into another over two hours but now it's like you either go to Pepper park or you go to other nature areas
- What is that like?
 - o I don't know, it was just convenient. Most of the time you go to one or the other, just because like if I'm going to Pepper park I'm probably walking into

- a bunch of water for an hour and so I don't want to do anything after that. It used to be like I can go from my work, to like walk for like half an hour there, and then cross over to Peffer Park. But now I can't do that.
- Yeah, there's inconvenience part. I'm also hearing a sense of loss too.
 - o A little bit. A few times I've gone over to like the park underneath 27 and I'm like "uhhh oh well. "
 - What is this "uhh"
 - o It's like "uhhh damnit, I wish that I walk there." There is legitimately a lot of rocks there, so I probably shouldn't
 - But there also a sense of kind of being pissed off like why, why did this happen
 - o Yeah, it is aggravating but like...I don't even use 27 so why does it need to be expanded? Why couldn't I just walk underneath it?
 - So is your favorite spot in tact?
 - o Yeah.
 - That hasn't been affected by the construction.
 - o No
 - Would it be affected?
 - o I don't think so.
 - How would you feel if it was affected?
 - o That'd be really frustrating. Because I really like it. So if it were cut off, then...I guess it would have to be something really in the middle of it, because I would just go around something that affected the entrance
 - They're not going to break, demolish the bridge for any reason. But I guess the most that could happen is obstructing your way
 - o It would just be frustrating, so it wouldn't be a huge sense of loss, I mean there's other stuff out there, obviously
 - That's the only part I mean it's your favorite part but
 - o It's my favorite part right now, but it's only a part
 - On this topic, how would you feel if someone erased the graffiti?
 - o That would piss me off.
 - Would it?
 - o Like I would still go there, but it would still piss me off. It'd be annoying because they would be disrespecting the people who spent time and connected with the place, and even recently people continued to add graffiti to it
 - So there's new progress on that wall
 - o Yeah
 - What kind of graffiti do you see on it?
 - o t's like a lot of tags and pictures of ...there's like a picture of a door. I have pictures of it if you want to...

- Oh yeah I would love to.
- [Looking at pictures]
- Oh cool!
 - o That is like the tunnel. And another one of the tunnel.
- Are you able to walk inside of the tunnels?
 - o Yeah, I mean there's a lot of water in the way some times, but you know, my feet get wet...that's my favorite one.
- Did you take these pictures spontaneously?
 - o Yeah, I got this phone in January. After that I was like, id like to take pictures to it
- And it wasn't like "Aki probably wants to see this"?
 - o No, I took this like a month ago, maybe? I have no idea what that says [looking at the picture]
- It sounds like you are genuinely appreciating the graffiti
 - o Yeah. Looks like there's a lot of penises here
- Haha is there anything in particular about the art in graffiti?
 - o It's just people expressing themselves and connecting with the place, I think. It's just like really cool and done it over years, and I don't know, it's just really cool. That says, if friends were flowers, I'd pick you
- Aw do you like the text on there?
 - o I do. Usually, especially, is this public space?
- Why do you like it?
 - o I don't know, sort of questioning whether they're supposed to be there, whether they are welcome there. Whether they are allowed to write anything there, perhaps, rebelliously.
- Do you like the rebellions part?
 - o Yeah, I do like the rebellious part, I don't like rules a lot
- Okay.
 - o It's nearing the end.
- So in this context, it's the rules that they're breaking. You like that they're breaking rules
 - o Haha. I don't know, I guess people who don't like graffiti. Basically the people who...I guess the city, or the state,
- Cool. And it's not like nature that they're hurting.
 - o No, there's already a bridge there. They're not writing on the grass
- It's not like they're cutting the grass. Awesome, you have a lot of pictures on there
 - o There's a lot of graffiti
- I never realized that, that's awesome.
 - o Yeah, and there's actually another graffiti that's not at that place.
- Do you like that place too?

- Yeah. I took this yesterday. I think it was yesterday. This is on like a, I don't know, a concrete cube, that is like in back behind Boyd on the creek.
- Got it
 - I guess it's like a water treatment thing. Or something to do with water.
- So do you think it's a pattern that
 - There's a frozen water fall
- Beautiful. How long ago was that?
 - That was in January I think? It was like 10 degrees for a while, or something like that, and everything froze.
- What did you think of this place? What did you think of this view?
 - It was really really cool. Everything was frozen. Normally it was always in motion, but just sort of stopped. Like time has stopped. Or something, so it was interesting.
- Visually too. I saw that diamond before. So this is like the same place in a different time?
 - Uh yeah, because I guess I went back and at first I was over there at the diamond and the second time I was like that actually says something I can actually read. And that's pick friends for flowers...which is sort of a morbid thing, because picking a flower kills it.
- That is.
 - Showing cat forever.
- I'm getting the sense that it's not any particular kind of graffiti or particular of art that you appreciate. You like the whole act of people graffitiing
 - Yeah I do. People connecting with the place.
- Cool does watching footprints of people connecting with the place. How does that make you feel?
 - I don't know, I just appreciate it, really. I just enjoy knowing people did that. Sort of like if you know like a cute person, you just enjoy experiencing their cuteness
- Yeah.
 - It's just sort of like an endearing thing
- I'm kind of feeling that. And also thinking, do I want the cute person to start talking with me, am I going to start a relationship with this cute person, and as you are just watching these graffiti in the woods, where are you with that? Do you want to...
 - Just observing. Appreciating the connection that they made. Sort of.
- Yeah.
 - Appreciating their humanity. Basically.
- That's interesting that this is one person who is cute. Sticking with that cute metaphor.
 - Haha

- It's not like this cute person that you like, but it's like many people doing different things too. What kind of cute is it? Is it like I'm attracted to this person kind of cute? Or is it just nice?
 - o It's just nice. Really. I don't know. It's none of these stereotypes of people. I can sort of know other people. And the awesome thing that they did.
- And you also don't know the people.
 - o Yeah I don't know the people. I don't know what they look like. But it also doesn't matter.
- That's cool
 - o Like they did this thing. And that's cool. Irrespective of whatever else they've done.
- All you know about their person is their art
 - o Right.
- And you just like looking at them.
 - o Yeah
- Cool. I'm also thinking, because I'm focusing on the questions on the graffiti. Is there a meaning to the fact that these graffiti are found out in nature?
 - o I think there is. Sort of like sharing even more of these experience with those people. Because it's not just like a wall uptown, everyone goes there, just happens to spray on it. They had to go out of their way to get there.
- And it's that going out of their way.
 - o Yeah like going out of their way. And maybe they were going there to just find the bridge, but they were also experiencing the same sort of things that I was experiencing
- And those experiences are what again?
 - o Just enjoying the beauty of nature, and relaxing and getting away from towns. Bureaucracy and capitalism, and that sort of stuff
- Awesome awesome. It goes back to that rebellious part too.
 - o It has a certain amount of rebellion
- I'm not trying to start a political argument, but do you feel like it's a rebellious thing when you go out there and appreciate the nature, appreciate the graffiti?
 - o I don't think it's rebellious, it's not on that spectrum. It's just sort of a thing.
- Gotcha. Politically neutral. Or apolitical.
 - o Yeah it's apolitical.
- But yes, the whole act of walking there might be apolitical. But there are political components in there that you like.
 - o Yeah, there are.
- And it's not like, I'm going to support the rebels or I'm going to appreciate their art, but I'm getting the sense that it's cool that they are rebelling
 - o It's more like a collectivist thing than an individualistic thing.

- Yeah what makes it collectivist?
 - o I guess because they are all going there and contributing and connecting with the same space. It's not subtle about one person, it's about the group of people that interact, even if they don't necessary interact at the same time, they could interact at different times, by just leaving an image, and the others see it, I don't know. Maybe it's just one person, I don't know.
- I think the initial thought that you were describing was it's probably different people doing different things and kind of contributing to the space together.
 - o Right
- I also was picking up on people going there at different times, it's almost this log of hey I was here, and then the next person is like I was here.
 - o Yeah, I think it's like that.
- Um, I have a question in mind, I'm not sure how to ask it. I'm trying to connect it to the whole dichotomy between town and nature, and it feels like when you're out there...I'm trying to think the whole act of graffiti...is that still a part of human civilization, or do you see it as a part of nature?
 - o I think it's a part of nature. I mean humans are a part of nature. We just sort of build buildings, crowd out the nature, but in that part, it is nature. There's the bridge there,
- So the bridge is not really...
 - o It's not exactly nature, but there are people doing very human things, not like very abstract, bureaucratic things, so I think that's a lot of it
- That's interesting, you use the word human as something very nature-y. So the graffiti on there is like human nature thing.
 - o Yeah, it's sort of like a painting. Obviously they didn't have painting.
- And obviously people who didn't draw diamonds...well maybe
 - o Maybe, I don't know. They didn't write in English, but it's the same sort of thing I think. [Laughs]
- But that's decidedly different from the business building
 - o Right
- So the human construction can be something that's very integrated into what you think of as nature.
 - o I guess it depends on the purpose of construction, and what it's used for, and all that
- Ok, great. So I've been focusing on the graffiti, I just want to check in with you, how much of special part is it, of you getting out to the nature
 - o How much of a special part is what
- Is the graffiti part, as opposed to the rest, whether it's...

- Umm it's a pretty special part, I think the reason why it's a special part is the graffiti, but I enjoy the trip there and the trip back too. And just getting the feet wet
- The literal act of...
- The literal act of getting the feet wet, because I always try for a while not to get the feet wet, but then after that I'm like oh ok, that's how it's going to be, ok.
- So there's initial discomfort, or hesitation
 - I guess hesitation too. Because you don't want to walk around with wet sox, you don't want to walk around with muddy feet, but it's sort of also relaxing in a way. Just to get it over with, get my feet wet, but also get my feet wet.
- But also the act of getting over it?
 - Yeah, getting over it, really. Like, yeah, that happened, ok.
- Yeah. Ok. And it's kind of like, there's something that you were hesitating, but now you're past the line so
 - Yeah, sort of therapeutic in a way.
- Yeah. This is really wonderful. Is there a particular element, particular thing in nature? And it doesn't have to be one thing. Are there particular things that you like seeing when you're walking whether it's the stream, the trees, or animals,
 - Yeah I think I really like the water. I really like the rocks and water and hopping from rock to rock, it's pretty cool. And I laugh at myself when I fall in, and there are like meadows and tadpoles occasionally, which are cool. If you cast a shadow over the meadows, they scatter away, so it's always fun
- Ok, it's fun because
 - Sort of interacting with them in a way. Like you didn't think I would be interacting with them but then I cast a shadow and I had an effect on them.
- How do you think you are perceived by them?
 - A shadow...like I don't know how they react...like why they're reacting to the shadows in that way, do they just like being in the sunlight, or are they afraid of me, I don't know.
- Or I guess more generally, how do you think you are perceived by nature? As you walk into it?
 - Neutrally. Sort of with ambivalence. Sort of like ok yeah, you're part of nature.
- And it's not like this foreign being stepped foot on...
 - I mean sometimes, when I'm clumsy and breaking a lot of sticks...it's like maybe I should be more respectful
- But there is the mutual recognition that yep, you're part of it, and there's someone who's a part of it doing things, as a part of nature.
 - Yep

- Awesome. We talked about what you do in nature. Do you do anything for nature?
 - o Not really. Sometimes I pick up trash on campus, but not really.
- Gotcha.
 - o I don't really do anything for nature.
- And this might start a whole other conversation, and I don't need it to, but I guess just because you were talking about capitalism and the political component of it, are you generally a political person
 - o I didn't used to be a political person, I haven't voted. Actually it's a really long story. So like the first 25ish years of my life, I was very nihilistic, like not really believing in any value, and sort of like everything's basically the same. But then I sort of identified that as like ok, this is nihilism, and that's what it is, and I started looking into what other people thought about it, and I guess other people sort of have solutions to the problem, and they have ways of thinking about it that maybe you can actually value things
- Did you see it as a problem?
 - o I did, because it was sort of miserable, I honestly didn't care about anything. I was in [university] for 9 years. Didn't really care about anything but last year, I cared about things, like a lot.
- Was there a triggering event?
 - o Um I don't really think so, I think it was sort of a steady rejection. Are you familiar with Camus? I basically read everything that he wrote. And like really enjoyed it and like all of that makes a whole lot of sense
- In problematizing nihilism?
 - o Sort of rejecting it, getting past it, like recognizing that there is no meaning, but you haven't killed yourself, so maybe get on with it. Use that as a starting place, and then go on from there.
- Ok. I cant help but think that this is coinciding with you re-discovering nature
 - o I think it is. I think they are related
- I'm thinking right now this is supercool stuff, and I wonder if it's weird of me to get deeper into it
 - o Oh no problem
- So you described where you were before this nihilistic mental place, where do you see yourself now?
 - o Uh I guess more apathetic with human suffering and animal suffering and just like very trying to be like a good person, and I don't know
- Yeah the way I'm hearing this, so, I don't know how you got into Camus, do you remember?
 - o The Wikipedia article on nihilism.
- Ok so you were just like, philosophically you were reading up on it

- So there's nihilism and there's absurdism that sorts of opposes nihilisms, and it mainly talked about Camus
- So you were just exploring your belief system and then came across Camus, and you started reading Camus, which led to you rejecting nihilism, and it didn't happen simply or smoothly,
 - No, but I mean essentially. I read the stranger, the Myth of Sisyphus, and then the plague, and the rebel and the fall
- Uh huh
 - And then also like the book of essays that he wrote during the French resistance, and WWII
- Wow you're way more of scholar than I am, I was a philosophy major, and existentialism and nihilisms was my favorite thing to study but you're much more knowledgeable about it than I am
 - Oh probably not, but I don't know
- So as you read it, you started to...was that the main force of you rejecting nihilism, do you think>
 - I think so, because there's always this idea that you had to have a starting place. People say this thing is valuable, but why, and If you keep asking why there's not something at the bottom. Eventually you have to say because.... well are you familiar with that? 50
- I know what you are talking about. Like you don't want to be trapped in this infinite of loop of doubt I guess, or questioning,
 - Yeah just like, why is this? Well you have explanations down to here, but here you're just like, well it's because!
- Yeah
 - And I would keep getting trapped in that like I couldn't believe in anything because...I couldn't...like it wasn't actually...it was all arbitrary.
- You said before that it was miserable
 - It was miserable not being able to believe in everything
- Do you think rediscovering nature – that was a result of you rejecting that nihilism, or do you think that was an active force in getting you out.
 - I think they were happening at the same time. Beginning a better appreciation for nature, and earth and all that, it sort of happened at the same time.
- And it's not like it's the chicken or the egg
 - It's both
- I'm also thinking in the context of just not being an extraverted person, and also not liking being around an overwhelming majority of extraverted people, did nature provide something that humans couldn't?
 - I don't know. Probably. I don't know what. Probably. At least the humans that I'm familiar with.

- Ok. Are all the humans you know extraverted people?
 - o They are more extraverted people. I think I sort of used the “cute” thing as an example earlier, because that's the kind of person that I like. That I feel like that kind of person has something for me that maybe similar to what nature has for me.
- So nature is more “introverted”?
 - o I think it is. I mean it can be. Here it is. Probably tigers are not.
- Right.
 - o Probably if there's actually a real feral animal, who's actually seeking his food, then it would be less introverted. But there are no tigers here. There're mostly squirrels
- And squirrels...
 - o Squirrels are fairly introverted.
- And it's their introversion that you like?
 - o Yeah
- It's all coming together. That's awesome, I also wanted to ask you more about your previous experiences in art in general, whether it's appreciating art or making art, whichever...?
 - o Yeah, I don't really have that much experience making or appreciating for the most part. I sort of like tried to over the last year, do stuff, but it was mostly mathematical in a way, like are you familiar with fractals?
- Yes
 - o So one thing I did over the summer was make a program to visualize the Mandelbrot set, which is way easier than I thought it would be
- What is that?
 - o The Mandelbrot set
- Yes
 - o It's like this 2x2 area on the complex plane. You pick a point and then you put a point through this equation, feed it into itself, and if it escapes after it goes into infinity, or gets greater than a certain value after like a 1000 thousand, you color it based on how many iterations it took for it to escape. If it doesn't escape after 1000, then you color it black, and then it makes this really intricate infinite complex thing...
- Are you pulling up a picture?
 - o Uh yeah.
- So what you did was, there was a computer program that you used to make that?
 - o I mean I made the program
- What major are you?
 - o Computer science.
- Oh wow!

- So it starts out, and then it's like the big...like it's part of that...I might actually using data...and also zooming into that...
- Is the shape changing as we zoom into it, or are we zooming into it?
 - It's not changing, we're just zooming into it. But you see I like that, and that.
- Uh huh.
 - I like little ones.
- Is this something you had to do for school?
 - No, it's just something I did. And then I took a class where I did it again
- Well you clearly liked it...oh damn, ok
 - Haha Yeah it keeps going indefinitely. I mean this video doesn't, but...
- What's going to happen once we kind of
 - Well so there a problem with floating numbers where they don't have arbitrary positions, so If two numbers are both really small, then it eventually is impossible to differentiate them from leading point numbers, so probably I don't know if it happens with programs they're using, but what happens with the program I made, is that it gets grainy and out of focus because you cant differentiate between the points anymore. I don't remember what question I'm responding to, but it keeps going indefinitely
- What do you like about it?
 - I guess the fact that it's sort of there. It's there to be explored. Sort of like nature. And it's not like someone made this, it's just like a feature of numbers that if you color them in this way, it makes complex patterns
- That's fascinating. That's so fascinating. So this was in response to me asking you about your previous art experiences.
 - And I guess this was me trying to do art. Like doing this and I guess trying to find specific places within the Mandelbrot set that are really cool, sort of do art by exploring, because I don't feel like I'm particularly skilled
- Do you draw?
 - I've tried to draw and it didn't go very well
- So you're kind of like examining what is the closest thing that I do that's artistic, and...
 - Yeah sort of. Artistic features of numbers and like yeah
- Have you connected, because like with nature, you like the fact that it's just there? Have you connected these two interests of yours together before?
 - Sort of. Like there's this book called the other beauty of plants. They use certain parts of construction to create sort of like nature images, from like an algorithm, and they can get really accurate
- That's awesome. That's fascinating. This video is really long

- It is. Eventually. It's almost done. It didn't get to the really interesting parts. It's showing you the big structure again a bunch of times. But there are like patterns
- Is this a video file?
 - This is from you tube
- But you made it
 - I didn't make it, this is someone else's but yeah I mean it's basically the same thing
- Yeah and also telling you how to make the movie, it sounds like it's something you can incorporate into the movie, if you want
 - It's something that I hadn't thought about before, but maybe I can
- Umm great, let me see if I have...I think I asked everything that I wanted to, and more.do you have anything else to say?
 - Do I have any questions? Is that what you're trying to say?
- I guess so, but in terms of your attitudes your feelings about nature or art, is there anything that you could say that could be informative?
 - I don't know, I don't think so.

Alex Second Interview

- So I'm going to start by asking how it was
 - I really enjoyed the process of filming, like going out and really looking at everything more closely. But once I went and looked at the footage that I got, I was sort of disappointed, it wasn't what I saw. I don't know if that's a limitation of me as a filmer.
- Did you feel like it was though? Did you think it was something inherent about the whole...?
 - It might have been something inherent about the whole thing, like you don't have the experience of your feet being wet, and you don't see everything. Like I took a picture when I was walking one time. I took a lot of pictures, but I'm thinking of one picture that I just could not get it right, like it was not...what I saw for whatever reason. [Showing the picture], like that, no matter how I took the picture, there was always something about it that I just did not...not quite like it wasn't getting the whole thing, or it wasn't getting the depth right, so I felt like it was a limitation of film.
- Because there's always a frame.
 - Yes, there's always a frame. And also we see and focus different than cameras do.
- Yeah so was that frustrating for you?
 - It was frustrating, and I think that was the main thing that made it take a really long time? Just working on it was kind of like this is never going to

be what I really want to be, because no matter what I do, it's not going to come out as what I see when I'm out there.

- Yeah, to break it down a little bit more, what do you think it was that was different between the filmed one and your raw experience
 - o I think a lot of it was not experiencing everything, you just see and hear stuff, and I would watch it without listening to it, and there are extraneous noises that I didn't want to put on the film. And it may be just because I focused on the wrong things with the camera, because it was hard to look and record at the same time, and record the things that you were looking at.
- You felt a separation between yourself and the camera
 - o Mmhm. And a lot of the footage was of the water, which seemed reasonable at the time, I guess but more like an even distribution of like foliage, the trees and stuff. Would've been a little bit better
- Was there a reason why you put in a lot of water, was that reflective of your experience being in nature at all?
 - o I think the water is what makes the particular experience very different, because a lot of the time people don't walk through water, because it's inconvenient, and when you go out in nature, you're hiking in trails and stuff, but the water makes it a little bit more immersive
- Ok was that something unique to the film making aspect that you decided to go to the water p or was that something that was unique to you?
 - o I mean I do that anyways, so I wasn't doing it just for filming it, that's just something that I do when I got there because it's the easiest way to get there. And I enjoy that
- So when you said that it kind of makes it different from walking on trails and people don't usually don't that, you meant that you do it because it makes it a more immersive experience
 - o That is one theory that I just came up, I don't know if it's actually the reason.
- Ok gotcha
 - o I think it was just fun thing to do at one time, and I just kept doing it
- And your film too. I don't know if it's, like you said, it's not the same thing as going out there, but, your liking towards the water was something that seemed to be reflective in the film as well.
 - o And that's also where most of the wild life is, throughout the whole area, when you re in the water, it s easier to see the meadows in the water, the little water bugs, I don't know if I got any of those
- Well I was looking at the film, and there was a part where it stayed with the shot towards the water. And I was like huh what's going on here, and I didn't notice it

- at first, but you can see, once you gaze long enough that there are little fish chilling out
- I think it might better, more easily seen in the non-YouTube version of the video. Because it's compressed, so you don't get as high of a resolution. I felt like it was pretty obvious when I was putting together that they were in the shot
 - Gotcha. Or maybe I wasn't focusing enough
 - Well I think it is a little less focused on YouTube
 - Is that the version that I got on my flash drive? I'm going to have to remember to take it out and give it back to you, because it's so small haha but yeah that's interesting so you chose to put some wildlife, some living creatures in the film. If you could analyze yourself, what was the purpose of including those fish?
 - I think during the process of making the film, and during the shooting and thinking about nature, I came to think of it as a home that I never really had, my home growing up was meh, and my home for the last 8 years, was pretty blech, like I didn't feel free at home, so going out in nature is sort of the place I can be my place, so including things where that is their home, sort of expressing home
 - Like you were sharing the home with other creatures, and other people even
 - And no one can necessarily take the home exclusively
 - Right there is no authority, kind of claiming to own the place. So you mentioned two or three homes. For the past 8 years, there was one home. Before that, there was another home. I know that you live here in [collegetown], is that what you meant by the last 8 years?
 - Well I mean I lived in [collegetown] my whole life. I lived with my parents until I was 18 and then I moved out with my brother and his roommate, and we lived in one place for 3 years and I lived in my current place for 5 years.
 - So it was basically the 18 years of living with your parents, and did you have any siblings? You have a brother
 - I have an older brother, older sister and younger sister
 - And then moving out with your brother and, I remember from the first interview that they are pretty extraverted
 - Yeah, like the other people in the house, so I try to take it as little space in the house as possible, and that's very constricting
 - Right you have to be very care about your territory, I guess
 - Yeah,
 - But it's very different with nature. Did you mention that this was something that you noticed after you started working on the project?

- Yeah, I came to think of that as one aspect of why I enjoy nature, and sometimes in the last 7 months I'm not sure exactly when, I just took a 6 pack of beer to Peffer Park, and just swung on the swing. And sang Cyndi Lauper songs laughs
- Oh cool. The swings, they are in the park area?
 - Yeah
- What time was it?
 - It was late, 8:30ish? Maybe 7:30ish?
- Ok. I'm kind of picturing it. Was there anyone in the park?
 - There was no one else in the park
- So it was just you and the park
 - Right
- And how did it feel to be doing that?
 - It was a little bit liberating, little bit paranoid
- Paranoid?
 - Just because like, hopefully no one comes
- Oh ok, gotcha. Because you were swinging and drinking and singing.
 - Right
- But it was both the paranoia and the liberation
 - Right
- That you never got at either previous home
 - Right
- That's really awesome. Was there anything else that you realized about your relationship with nature as a result of starting this project, whether it's
- I think that was the main one that I thought about, there are probably other ones that I haven't consciously realized yet, but I don't know what those are
 - Right, but you're not denying that there might be other ones

What did you like about making this film?

- Really liked the filming aspect, I liked putting it together a little bit less, because it wasn't a seeing type thing, but filming it and going out there and looking at everything more closely and appreciating things I hadn't appreciated before. And also the reflections on the water, when it was on film, they were not really there. In real life, the scintillations on the water.
- Reflections of any particular thing?
 - Just like light.
- Oh gotcha.
 - That was cool.
- That's interesting, because it might be a little different from my experience, and I definitely like both aspects, but for me editing was something that made it more interesting. But that's really valid and interesting, and relatable that in editing, you

- don't see the same thing as what you actually saw with your flesh. Some of the other creative decisions ...what was the reasoning behind the song selection?
- It's just one of my favorite songs. And it makes me think of earth. It's like a small blue thing. That's not what she's singing about, but it makes me think about that, and there are a lot of natural references in this song.
 - And I was reading the lyrics. I keep thinking about, is she talking about fish? But for you too, it seems like she was talking about a lot of things in nature
 - Yeah
 - Were you thinking that she was referring to something in nature?
 - I think the song was more about a personal relationship between two people, kind of. The particular words that she used made me think of nature
 - Any particular thing in nature?
 - Some of the things in the video, sparkling water, and the sky, and in general. Nothing too specific
 - And it's also a song you really like
 - Mmhmm
 - That's really interesting to hear. Was the location all in [collegetown]
 - Yeah, just like the stream and Pepper park
 - And was it the route that you take to check out the graffiti?
 - Yeah
 - Was it intentional that it was actually the route that you take to go see the graffiti?
 - I mean that was the, like I guess it was supposed to be about, it was initially suggested to be about a thing in nature, so I just went with that, the stream was the thing in nature, so I just wanted to get the entirety of that experience
 - So I guess you felt that it was supposed to be about this one thing,
 - So I kind of had that in my head, it was probably less restrictive than that, and I sort of went with that
 - No, that's helpful for me to hear. So the frame that you and I made together was it was about this walk towards the graffiti, like the experience, and I guess that was a "script" for you
 - Yeah, a little bit. I could've gone another way with it, but it seemed like a logical thing
 - Yeah that makes sense. That makes sense, and don't feel bad about doing that. The whole project is not just like you making the film but also the relationship between you and I and how I say things that affect what you do too, so that's really interesting. So it was really the trip towards the graffiti that was your film. [pause] I also don't know if you had thoughts behind your title?

- Laughs That's just a thing when I don't know what to call them, just like a "thingy"
- Ok, would that be what you name your film/
 - I didn't ever think of ever giving it a name. It was just sort of like you have to give it a name on a film
- Ok gotcha that makes sense
 - You have to give a name on a file system, but the whole thing, I don't know if I would have a name for it If I wasn't forced to have a name on it.
- I was watching it, I think some of the preconceptions that I had was, because we had talked about it during the interview, there was going to be some graffiti. And I was watching it, and I was thinking, is he ever going to show the graffiti, and in the end there was finally graffiti, and I was like, alright!
 - Laughs
- And I guess it's interesting, because there was our conversation affecting you to think that it has to be the whole thing, so it made sense that it was the whole thing. I guess what I'm asking you isn't really a question, but something that I just noticed, where you chose to put the graffiti in the end. What were your thoughts behind that?
 - I mean it's sort of the destination. It sort of logically goes at the end. And then there's the trip back to...that is less the goal. I feel like that's the lesser part of the experience. Like I go there, and then there's this half an hour trip, and then I see the graffiti, and I'm like ok I'm done. And then I go back but then I'm thinking about what I'm going to do after, less than what I'm currently experiencing.
- So the film, the structure of the film, is very much like that where, on the way there, you're noticing the fish, you're noticing the reflection of the water, you're noticing what's actually in front of you, and also you get to the destination, there's a glance towards the graffiti, but afterwards that, yes there is this sign towards the return. And am I right in thinking that the film starts with a path where there is grass and purple flower, was that the same path as what was there in the end
 - That was actually the same shot, I broke it in half
- Oh wow ok that makes sense
 - I mean I took that as I was leaving
- Oh I see, ok. So there was some thought behind the structure of the whole thing. Where you wanted to start with...basically making the start and end be the same footage
 - I don't know that there was that much thought behind that, it was more of like a, I tried it and I was like, that's nice
- Gotcha It wasn't...planned

- Yeah it wasn't as much planned out. And like this is what I wanted to do to achieve this effect. It was also a function of, there were certain words in the song that I wanted to pair up to certain scenes in the film, and there was some empty space in the beginning. But I felt it achieved a nice effect
- I thought so too. And it wasn't like a planned thing, but it was nonetheless an effect. What did you like about it? What was the nice thing about that?
 - A lot of the shots in the film was static. It was sort of looking at something for a few seconds and maybe some things in the shot are moving like the water and the fish. I'm not moving, and I had a lot of footage that I felt like I had to not use because I was moving and it just didn't work right for me. But it allowed me to use some of that where I was moving, because I felt like that was something that I wanted to use in some way, but a lot of it was not very good
- So you kind of found the place for those moving shots
 - Right and it was like that's also a beautiful part of the experience, where I don't notice it
- What's the beautiful shot
 - Like the purple flowers, and the grass and the trail out of it
- And the fact that you are moving does seem like what it is...sorry that didn't make sense. The act of moving, you're not stopping and glancing towards it, you're not ignoring it per se, but it's something that's a part of the moving image, as opposed to something that you stop and appreciate the view, that's also a part of your experience, it looked like
 - I think so
- I'm going to pull up the lyrics to hear more about the pairing of the lyrics...so, yeah, do you mind if you do a directors commentary on this?
 - The "scattering of the light", the first time she says that, I have it paired up with the scintillations in the water, where there's the sparkling. I had the footage, and I was like really like this, and I decided to pair it up with the song, and I really like the song, and she says that, and then when I was like watching it and listening to the song, I saw that, and I heard the verse a little bit after, so I was like let me move this around a little bit
- So that was the first pair up that you wanted to do, where you had the water glimmering, and that's paired up with the song, or with when she says those words, but then afterward, you kind of moved around a little bit, is that what you're saying
 - I guess what I just said was that I sort of saw that in the footage, and I was listening to the song, and they're both there, but in different locations, temporally, and then I was like this would maybe be better if it were more paired up so I like moved some of the stuff around so they could match up

a little better. Like “I’m thrown against the sky” – there was a particular shot where there was a reflection of the clouds in the water, so I tried to match that up too

- Was the music...you weren’t thinking of as you filmed
 - o No
- So it was more post-production if you will.
 - o Mmhmm
- But it also sounds like it became the central structure, the skeleton of how you wanted to structure the film
 - o It was kind of a little bit
- Was that an intentional thing, to use the song as guiding force behind where to put what?
 - o I don’t think it was intentional when I picked the song, later it sort of just happened I think. Like after I decided I’m going to pair up the song, it just occurred to me that certain things might be better. Like originally I was going to record some sort of voice over for it, but I didn’t. Do I really have that much to talk about over the film? I felt like maybe I can talk about for a minute. It was only a minute so I didn’t want to fill up four minutes of filler
- 4 minutes of filler, you mean filler with your narration?
 - o Yes, I didn’t want to say a bunch of meaningless stuff
- I think I somehow caught that...maybe we were editing together, and you mentioned that there was narration in the film, which you chose not to put in the final film, and you just told me that... so was the reason basically that “why would I have one minute of narration when they are three of four minutes of nothing?”
 - o Right. Like, what do I do with the rest of it, I’m only narrating it for like a minute?
- Ok, so did it feel weird or uncomfortable that there would be one minute of talking and the rest would be silence?
 - o Yes, felt a little bit unnecessary
- Gotcha. Which makes me curious, what were you talking in that one minute of narration?
 - o The way that I had it planned out was sort of... thinking of nature as the home that I never go anywhere else ...As I was growing up and what the problems were in the last 8 years and how that is different in nature and how the space is not really doesn't belong to any single person or entity so it's all shared and then thinking about going over that part as I approached the graffiti because it's like this bridge for someone to sort of like

appropriate this piece of nature but then people just sort of wrote on it anyways

- Ok ok yes do you think anything was lost by not including the narration?
 - o I think a sort of personal aspect to the film was lost
- Okay but it was still like a decision that you made though right? So was it a decision to make? I mean there was the whole thing like uncomfortable structural aspect of what would I do with the three other minutes of silence but was it a decision on your part to you to be like I don't have to kind of share my personal story behind this visual aspect?
 - o Yeah it was more like I like what is the purpose of the film and I could still achieve the purpose without the personal narration
- Gotcha, and what was the purpose of the film?
 - o I think sharing the journey and the graffiti and experience, and the reflection upon the experience wasn't so important
- Yeah so that makes a lot of sense. So it's more going on this journey than the reward which is a different experience from going on to this journey while listening to your past
 - o And yeah I guess like pros and cons aren't really what I have in mind, but those two are different experiences.
- Since you mentioned, I do have an understanding of what the problems are in the past 8 years of living with your brother, but in the original narration that you had, and you don't have to share anything you don't want, what were the problems in the first 18 years?
 - o The house I lived in was always fairly messy, and a little dilapidated and very dark, and I never felt that I could invite friends over to my house; it was always sort of "No, why would you do that, they don't want to experience this." So, I felt always sort of alienated in that way
- Because your friends wouldn't come to the house?
 - o Right, it felt like that was the social experience that I didn't ever get to have. I was also in homeschool for 3 years, so that screwed everything up too. And my parents were very religious when I was growing up, and they're still very religious, but it doesn't affect me as much, now that I'm moved up, so just being in that house for 18 years really sucked, sort of in the same way that being in a house of extraverts really sucked, but for different reasons"
- I gotcha. And you talked about that in that narration that was almost going to be in the film?
 - o That was the plan but I didn't actually do the narration it was more like this is sort of the skeleton of what I'm going to talk about
- Oh ok

- I talked about a little bit in other things, like in writings in other classes
- Oh ok gotcha
 - Oh for classes, this isn't a class
- Right
 - Like over the past year I've talked about it more. So I had an idea of what I could talk about. It would be about a page, which would take a minute or a minute and a half to talk about, and there would be all this space
- And was your plan to kind of do the talking before getting to the graffiti
 - Yeah
- Ok gotcha. But it didn't quite work out because post-production, you learned that now I have all these words and a concentrated dose of footage.
 - Right
- Ok, yeah. You mentioned you weren't able to invite friends, which is an interesting contrast with the purpose of your film, to kind of invite people to share the experience.
 - Yes, I think that is pretty important. You can invite whoever you want in nature. It's just there. It's just nature. There's nothing good or bad about particular parts. It's not like, oh I don't like this nature, why do you like this
- It sounds like that was something that...because you said that was one liberating aspect of nature. And this might be a stupid question because I'm about to ask I wonder why you did it all in [collegetown]? So I wonder if that was less a decision and more a restriction, or did you have a decision behind I actually do want to do natural scenes of [collegetown], as opposed to anywhere else?
 - Uh, it was sort of a restriction, not like specifically I wanted to [collegetown], it was more like, I'm not familiar with natural areas outside of [collegetown] and I don't have a connection with them and I have a connection with this one place right now
- Which makes sense. It's also not the case that I wanted to do outside, and take footage, but it was more based on your personal intimate relationships with [collegetown] nature. I want to talk about emotions. I think we were hinting towards emotional side of nature. Could you talk about how it made you feel as you were making this film?
 - I felt very free and happy. There was a little bit less free and happy when I had a \$500 camera in my hand
- Ok no that's interesting
 - I had to be careful
- Oh gotcha. What camera did you use?
 - I got one from the library.
- Oh you did, cool

- If you break it, it costs \$500.
- So there were some unnatural aspects in filmmaking, does it go against your usual experience of going out in nature?
 - Yes, a little bit, also there was one point when I had my normal bag, and I had the camera, and it was too many bags. So I would lean over and there would be too many bags, and it would be restrictive having all these equipment with me.
- I'm kind of...because you didn't go out and do photography, I mean I guess you did with the graffiti with your phone, but videomaking and filmmaking was something you do, it was something that was separate from you, that you had to add on to your usual ware, and I guess that was not exactly a comfortable experience whether it's about carrying them with you or shooting it, and coming back and editing, was that an uncomfortable experience for you?
 - A little bit, not extremely uncomfortable, sort of with minor inconvenience, like having the camera around with me and like having to point it at things, like look through it to make sure it's getting the right things, and it's got this tiny screen, so I wasn't 100%. Another thing I noticed that a couple of times I intended to go out and take footage, there were like people there, groups of like 4-5, that was sort of uncomfortable. That might be sort of my asocial-ness
- Was it uncomfortable that they were there, or was it uncomfortable that they were there and you had a camera
 - Both? It would've been uncomfortable that they were there, but the added, I'm doing this thing that's maybe not what they expect someone to be doing
- Hm ok, so you were thinking about what they were thinking of you as you were using your camera
 - Right
- Was there anything that, you might have mentioned this already, but so this is a new thing of getting out there using something that was unusual and uncomfortable with you, but was there any part of it that you found it that was surprisingly comfortable, that you surprisingly liked
 - About shooting the video?
- I guess so. The whole new I don't want to say identity, but I guess that's what I mean. This whole new thing of making an art film, an art project out of this. So I really mean the whole aspect, and I don't just mean carrying a bunch of stuff. In any aspects of it
 - I guess I never thought of myself as an artist in any shape or form. So being able to find something that I really liked and put it together, and to

be able to be shared, instead of having to drag someone out there, like actually being able to share it was nice

- Do you think you will share it?
 - o Maybe after I watch it a couple more times.
- I'm not suggesting you share it, and of course because of confidentiality I won't share it. So let me see. This might be a more abstract question: do you think your relationship with nature changed as a result of this project?
 - o I think I maybe a bit more intentional, like I've spent so much time thinking about it, and thinking about it as a home, instead of just as an activity, so it's more like a space for everyone, including me. Instead of just I'm going to kill 2 hours
- One feels much more meaningful than the other
 - o Right
- Ok. And home sounds like a pretty important thing for you, in the context of what you shared.
 - o Yes I think it was
- Because you could be hanging with someone, just to kill time. And you could be hanging out with someone, thinking they make me feel like I'm at home. And two things are very different...I feel like a lot about graffiti in our first interview. Was there anything you wanted to add to that, or was there any thing that you found as a result of shooting? You might have talked about it already
 - o I don't think anything especially. There are some things that are easy to read, when you're watching the video, than they are in person. I think in person, you're focusing on one small part of it, but when it's written across 10 feet, and a little faded, maybe it looks easier when you can look at it from far away
- Was it the same thing with the more natural scenery? Where it was different and also kind of disappointed by what you felt in your raw experience vs. what you saw in the computer or the camera
 - o I think the graffiti is a bit different in that regard, because it's more of like a focused small area. When you're looking at one piece of graffiti you don't necessarily care about everything else that's going on, so it's not affecting your experience of it. So when you look at it in person vs. on camera, there's less of a difference, because you're tuning everything out anyways. But when you're looking at, say a section of the stream where the trees are framed just right, and the wave is hitting in, and all this stuff is going on, it's sort of the whole thing that's important
- Yeah and it doesn't take away the value of the graffiti, but nonetheless it is different from the more immersive aspects of nature when there's a bunch of

- things on and you like being immersed in those things, but when you're looking at the graffiti it's already a visual exercise.
- Like no one's directing your attention to a particular part of the stream, you're just enjoying all of it. But when you're looking at the graffiti, you're being directed to look at one thing, like this is a thing that I worked on at this time and it encapsulates some idea, maybe, and there's intent there, so you're looking at one 4x4 area.
 - That's really cool. So I guess the whole destination of your experience and the film, that was one aspect of the film that wasn't lost in the process of being shot
 - Thought it is dark in the tunnel. So there's more there than what is shown in the film, and it's sort of hard to show it, because the film even gets too much in one particular part of it, and you're not entirely sure what you're attention should be directed at when you're looking at it
 - That was an insight that I didn't think about it before
 - Me too haha
 - You're not making it up though?
 - I did just come up with the idea, but I'm not just saying that. That is actually a proper reflection.
 - Great. I don't have a lot of other structured questions. Was there anything else you wanted to add, in general, about the whole thing, about the whole project?
 - I think it made me appreciate me appreciate the authenticity of nature a little bit more
 - Authenticity? What do you mean by that?
 - Just like actually being out there, and experiencing it for yourself instead of what someone has captured, which is kind of ironic thing, because you are going out there and capturing. But it made me appreciate that we can't get the whole thing
 - So it sounds like...the whole difficulty of capturing it is making you realize that it's supposed to be that way because nature is an authentic thing that you can't really manipulate and make it your thing.
 - Yeah I think that's kind of what I meant
 - I hope so haha. Anything else?
 - I think that's it. It made me think about nature a lot more.
 - Gotcha. Cool. It sounds like, remembering from what you said about nature in the first interview, it wasn't like you hated nature before, and then you started liking nature, but I think the whole experience of thinking about it, or shooting, or thinking about what to include, what you should film, and all that thing made the whole experience different from killing 2 hours and made it into this is home to me, and home is important because I didn't have a comfortable home

- I think my ideas about nature before was a little bit more abstract and theoretical, and now it's more like this is actually what I appreciate, and here's why I appreciate, and I appreciate the rain hitting the water, because of this. It's like a guttural feeling. Yeah I think it changed the way I think about nature
- That's really cool. Well thank you so much!

Melissa First Interview

- So you had some ideas about what kind of you film you want to be making, could you elaborate on that?
 - Ok, I'm a filmmaker. And photographer. And my style is like low-key lighting. So I thought that I would do something with light. And how it creates a mood. Through that mood, the person who is observing, and person who is participating in the actual looking onto the picture, it creates the mood and everyone has different ways of how they deal with certain light coming. Certain people can't stand a lot of brightness or some people just love to be subdued in dark. For myself, my house is pretty dim. And so I like to control the natural light coming in through the window. So with the shades, and certain times of the day, I like how it comes in and it hit's the basket or something like that. And I like to control the natural light inside, if that makes any sense
- Uh huh
 - So I thought that it would be something that I would try. For other people to see and understand how I see light and how it affects me.
- Yeah could you go a bit more into how light affects you? Does it put you into a certain mood? Sad? Happy?
 - Well basically, I am a depressed person. I wake up depressed, I go to sleep depressed. But what helps me come out of depression is seeing how light hits certain things. I could be driving, and I can see certain things that normal people won't give it a time of day. So just seeing how light just affects people's mood and how it hits their skin. I'm a really deep thinker. I look beyond the surface of things. Some people say I go too deep. Say, "Why you go so deep into noticing things?" I guess by working with the camera, and having that magnetic eye that magnifies everything, when I take the camera down, and I look with my naked eye, I try to find the small things that I would see through my lens.
- There's a difference between what you see with the naked eye and what you see through the camera.

- Yeah right. Because it narrows the scope. Because you have that big Cyclops of an eye that you're looking at, so what you see becomes enclosed. So it makes you look at more of the details of what's in there than just looking around. Because when you're looking at the peripheral, you have all this to look at and notice, but when it narrows everything down, life becomes through the lens. And that's one of my slogans on my business is called, I say, from my mind through my lens. So what I see envision in my mind, when I look through my lens, then everything is magnified and I can pinpoint details that you cannot see with your naked eyes.
- I'm really getting that sense of that frame serving as something that helps with your focus. When you're looking with your naked eye, there's no focused frame, so it's hard for you to focus on a certain, once you're enclosed in a frame, then it's a photograph or videograph of this water, and that thing, and you focus more on each thing
 - Yes. Exactly
- Um so how long have you been into photography, videography, cinematography, things like that?
 - Since 1990
- Can you talk about the progression of that or what kind of thing you've been doing
 - Originally I started off...so I'm old, I don't mind my age, I'm 58. I started off as a music major. My husband and I got married, went to service, that kind of thing. I dropped out of school. And when I came back 10 years later, I still wanted to do something creative, but I didn't want to do music anymore. So that's when it was probably my darkest point getting depressed, that's when I began to notice me controlling my light coming in, and I thought maybe I'd go into photography and videography. So I went into school, and then I did some internships at smaller studios. I didn't want to get into the major studios, because you get lost in the shuffle and everything was union from California. So I went into the smaller studio, I learned everything from dragging cables to directing and I loved it. Where we worked, I worked for the city so we did a lot of interviewing, we did things for Easter Seals, so we had to go out and do vignettes, and videotaping people's stories as they tell what happened to them, and how they got into this accident and whatever, it intrigued me so much because I'd be getting into looking through the lens, and I could see the details in their face and the pain that they endured and it engulfed me. It engulfed me so much and I thought I got to do this for the rest of my life. And so that's why got into it. And so once I left California I came to

Texas to work with my childhood friend. We've been knowing each other since we were 10 years old and he was a composer, so we joined forces to form a small film production. And we just made short films. And then we put that on hold and we started working with kids, so we taught them how...they already were knowing video production, but we taught them how to do the business aspect from conception to completion. So it's all student ran. And just seeing all these kids, and these kids are I don't want to say at-risk, because all the kids are at risk. But kids that don't have a lot to work with. And seeing them being resistant at first, but going through the process of being able to create something that's theirs, and to take it to the largest film festival in the world and meet people from all over the world is just an awesome feeling.

- Yeah I'm listening to the awesome feeling listening to the story. You were talking about your depression, and how you got interested in film-making or photography because how you play with the light, and I'm wondering if, in making the decision to get into the career, there was a very personal reason behind. That might be an obvious point, but I'm wondering what the personal reason was. Was it to find a way to heal, was it find a way to look at your depression, I'm not sure how to articulate that...
 - o Well, I think it gave me an avenue to express what I was feeling inside. It became an extension of pain that I was able to get out of my body, and put it into, you know, an object. To the opposite (outside noise) of that object to see the life I have. You understand that? I start with my pain that is inside of me, and I'm using this tool to get rid of it, and then through the tool, I see myself as growth.
- Wow, okay so tool being the camera, and then when you talk about seeing it, you talk about the photograph or the film. When you see it, what kind of feeling does it invoke in you?
 - o [Crying] – it makes me feel like I accomplished something. I grew up with low self-esteem, like I'm not worthy of anything. Seeing that I was able to make something, that's what made me happy. Sorry
- What kind of tears are they?
 - o ...Happy. They were very low points where I did not want to continue life. It was just very difficult. Feeling like I didn't fit in with anybody. Because I don't smoke I don't drink, I don't do drugs, that's pretty much everybody. When you don't feel like you fit in with anybody, you have to be able to love yourself, and like yourself, be able to stay with yourself, be by yourself. I'm sorry. [Crying]
- No, I work as a therapist, so this is completely fine with me. But I also want to check in with you, I don't want to make you uncomfortable

- I'm fine
- I'm very in awe of your story today. So thank you for sharing today.
 - I'm ok. I'm ok
- It really sounds like filmmaking or photography was a personal path, I'm not sure out of depression, because you still feel it but
 - I look at depression as a drug. Because it something that starts with you, and then, it depends on the person but, then it builds and builds and builds. It builds over years. So like with drugs, very few people can just quit cold turkey out of it. Cured. So it's something you have to learn how to backtrack to get out of it. Some people can do it with medication; I tried that, no, not for me. It just made me a zombie. I didn't want to do it. It took the life out of me. So I tried to do natural thing, meditations, walking, breathing, and I did ok with it [laughs] Yeah, it takes years to get to the point through depression, and it'll probably take years to backtrack it, to get to rid of it or at least learn how to deal with it. And when those attacks come on, you know what to do to get yourself out to make yourself better,
- And so for some people medication is answer, for some exercise is the answer, but for you filmmaking and photography seems to serve the purpose of getting you through those moments
 - Because I have a very low tolerance for any kind of medication so I didn't want to do that. My oldest brother was a heroin addict, so he made me promise, don't do what I did, you know if you can try to live life to the fullest without those false things that make you feel temporarily good, so that's what I did. He said your body is a temple, and what you put in it, is what's going to come out. So if you put trash in it, trash will come out
- And you will feel the trash
 - Yes. So I saw what he endured. And I was going to do a documentary on him, but he passed away
- I'm sorry to hear that
 - Just so that other people can see and feel they don't have to do these things. Another thing with photography and video is, before I leave this world, I want to make a difference with the tool that was given to me. Whether I help somebody because I have a strong heart for exploited children, would like to do something with them, with my tools, to help the homeless, I want to make a difference with the tool I was given
- How do you think photography or film will help homeless people or children who are exploited?
 - I think it's a tool to get the word out. I heard the story of the radio that this guy did a 911 call he was driving. He called and said I think I'm driving behind an amber alert. And they checked it out. And I was like oh man

that man just saved a child. And it brought tears to my eyes. And I thought I want to do something like that. I don't want any recognition, I just want to help

- Yes, if you could use filmmaking...
 - o Yes, filmmaking, photography, in some kind of way, and with the today's world, it's tech-savvy, it's media, it's instant messaging all over the world. You can send messages in an instant. So not like before, things needed to be developed and send it out, and by the time that it gets sent out, it's old. But with the technology now, you can save people. Instantly you can see on Facebook or TV it's just amazing. When I started video, the old cut and editing, ...with computer and everything, it's so instant.
- Again thank you for sharing that. It's very inspiring thing to hear.
 - o I have nothing to hide. I'm very transparent person. I feel that whatever I say, possibly helps someone
- I wonder if that's how you see your film too.
 - o I think so. Um that's why...because I was thinking, what could I do. Why don't I use what helps me? So you know, it could help a recluse person who sits in the house and don't want to be exposed to the outdoors. Maybe they'll open, crack open the blind and let some light to come in. and that's the start to at least being able to feel the outside the world
- And that's a beautiful thing to hear. I'm thinking about a couple of things. One is the piece about, at first, you were talking about how it became this tool to heal for you, but then it kind of, it still, but it became a tool that you connect with other people, or help other people. So it's both for you and for other people as well
 - o I wanted to be able to share. Of course you want to help yourself. But once you help yourself, then it's time to give back. So you want to help as many people as you can.
- And I'm also kind of like struck by the humbleness I think of just like the hope for someone to open window. And it's not like you're telling someone to go hike everyday,
 - o Right. You have to start somewhere. And sometimes it's the baby step. When I first got married, my apartment caught on fire. But we weren't home. We were coming home, and we were joking, our place is on fire. But it really was. The guy who lived directly across from us was a recluse. And they had to axe his door down to bring him out. So everyone was curious, how did this man live? So once they let us go back, it was like a walking tour of this guy's home. And so oh my god, how could someone look like this? There was not one spec of light coming through this man's place. He had paper from floor to the ceiling, and it was pretty much total darkness. And I said how sad, and I lived right next to this man. And I

knew he didn't come out, but I didn't know how bad he was. But I felt so bad, because I wasn't able to touch. So that why I thought about, at least have the spec of light coming through the window. And just think about all the stuff he had in there, it could've shed a light on, like a book that could blossom, take some dust off

- I'm also listening to you, and I'm struck by that it's not about what's outside, it's about knowing what you have inside.
 - o Exactly exactly. Because inside is not just the room you're in, but it's all here, chest. You let it in here. From here it goes in here,
- That's a great metaphor. Not just a metaphor but something that's really real. If you let light in, open the window, open your heart, then you'll let light shine in on you. And see what's going on within yourself. I've also been thinking about the metaphor of seeing the light at the end of tunnel and how that's often the metaphor of things are tough right now, but there is a light signaling.... I wasn't sure if there was a point to that thought...
 - o Because they usually are thought with death
- Oh ok
 - o And it doesn't have to be that way. Because people, they are not usually dead in the sense of lights are out, but for so many people, their light inside is dead. Sometimes you have to open avenues up to see that light, at the end of the tunnel. You don't have to be in the hospital bed to see the light at end of the tunnel, or it could be life too
- Yeah it could be this existential death, where you are living, but you don't feel like you are living. Everything is gloomy, but finding that light – it could be disorienting at first, but you can see things more clearly
 - o Yes
- That's very beautiful to hear. And I say that sincerely. I'm also thinking about the nature piece. I'm thinking about how, when we talk light coming through the window, were not talking about turning on the lights, we're not talking about turning on lamps. Were talking about...
 - o Natural lighting.
- Do you think there is significance to natural lighting vs. artificial lighting?
 - o Of course. I look at natural lighting as life. It breathes. It comes alive. Artificial lighting is...it is what it is. It's artificial...say you have to take a picture, and you have to take the same subject, same scene, and you use natural lighting, I think it brings about the aura of the person. Their skin just soaks it up, and it's almost like pulse
- Pulse?
 - o When you have the artificial lighting, you do the same thing. The picture could look stunning. But if you look not just with your eyes, you have to

go deep; you can sense that it's not the same kind of feeling there. You don't get that pulse that you would get, when sun light or shadows or fog is showing on an image. You just can't, I don't think you can duplicate 100%

- Yeah, right, it's bright, but with natural lighting, when you say pulse, there is this life, like you said. When you say pulse I'm thinking of heartbeats.
 - o Yes, exactly exactly. If you will...it's almost like your heartbeat is no longer in you. It becomes around you. It becomes an aura. It kind of pulsates this feeling.
- Yeah, and kind of going back to what we talked about letting the light in, through the window, that's only possible, hope becomes possible only because we're letting in light, we're letting life through the sunlight. And it would be a completely different thing, if we were
 - o A light on the stand, or simulate the same thing
- Yeah yeah. I guess when you say simulate, I'm thinking how real the natural light is. As opposed to artificial being faked. There's something very authentic about...
 - o Yes it is. You just can't duplicate that. It's there for everyone to share. And you know light bulbs, they go off and on. They burst and stuff like that. But light is eternal. Whether there is the same kind of light, or five degrees cooler, it's ongoing, never ending.
- What do you think makes it never-ending
 - o Well of course there is the higher being. Whatever religion you are, whatever god or deity or whatever, it's there for all. It crosses all genders, it crosses all cultures, if the power went out all across the world, you're still going to have natural light at the time sun is supposed to come out. To be for all to use.
- But I think um that's again it sheds a light onto another aspect of what we were talking about. Again going back to the thing about letting light into the window, we were talking about something spiritual too
 - o Right. Spirituality rides on the beam of the light coming through. And it glides it, and it's up to the person or the object to let it enter. Especially a person to enter your being. So, this spirit is riding on the light and it hits your skin and it's up to you to accept what is given to you at the moment. It's up to you to decide how it's going to make you feel. Once it touches your skin or as you look at it hit a wall or whatever it bounces back at you, whether it's your skin or clothing or whatever is surrounding, at that moment in time, it's your decision to create a feeling, an emotion, what to make that experience at that point in time.
- It feels like this sense of touch
 - o Exactly exactly

- And then you feel touched, you feel like you have to respond to it in some kind of way. Um, what other things can you say about natural light?
 - o I think there are degrees of it. Um from the subdued lighting to the extreme bright, there's a reason why when it gets too bright, we're not able to see in the...oh how to say it...because when you get to the extreme bright, you have to close your eyes, or you'll go blind. Pretty much. And there's a reason for that. You're not supposed to take in that much energy. And it depends on people's eyesight and even if you're blind, you could feel the light, and it's a reason why you can't absorb that much light. Maybe you're not supposed to have that much energy in your body
- Because you don't have the capacity for it?
 - o Well capacity is a given, but I'm saying more so on you're just not supposed to carry that much energy in your body. Not so much the medical part, but I'm saying, I think god for me is, he only wants you to have so much, you hit the glass ceiling, and that's not. The other side is not for you to experience. You are a child and you need to hit this plateau...this is all you're going to experience with this type of energy, I don't know if it makes any sense
- It does it does, and I really appreciate the distinction from the medical piece. It's not about that. It's something more moral perhaps. Not moral like sins, and things like that, but in the sense that god is teaching us a moral lesson in terms of there needs to be only a little bit. This is perhaps my arrogance in asking this, but I wonder what gods reasoning is, why so little
 - o Well I think he considers his children and I guess you don't want, you shouldn't have as much knowledge or energy or power than your parents. It doesn't matter how old you get, not as much power.
- Yeah there was a point about if you consume too much light, there is blindness. Because it's only a beam of light you can focus on whatever a thing is being shined on, but if you open the window all the way, then you'll go either go blind, or you're not going to focus on certain little things, those little steps that are important. Sounds like a very important part of this
 - o I think so
- Anything else you want to be talking about in terms of the natural light topic
 - o Because I know we talked about natural light from the sun, you have the opposite, in like the snow. The light that's on the cooler side, and it works the same way, except the temperature. And I think that's why we are as human beings, supposed to live within these realms to become comfortable, not so much the medical idea, but just to be comfortable mentally, spiritually, and emotionally, because it's for me I feel emotions on the sun side, and the you know, the cooler side, and it brings different

emotions, the moon give you whole different emotions than the sun, and rain, some people love rain, some people hate rain, and it brings different emotions. I had a friend in Seattle, a place that rains rains rains. [friend's name] prays for the rain, and she said, I've never been so depressed, because it's always raining, but I think I'll love it because I always loved the rain. It depends on what seasons, what elements, you know, that you feel it takes on your emotions, I don't know if it's something you're born with, or something you grow up and end up with

- I wonder if there's something to be said about, what you said about seeing you on a photograph, whether it's perhaps a project that we have, and we feel better, and we see our feelings projected on the weather, whether it's the sun or the weather, because each of us have different feelings, however those weathers or elements reflect us...that was just my thought that you can take or leave. And so I realize the movie is your relationship with nature. And we have been focusing on natural light. Is there anything else when you think about your relationship with more than human nature?
 - o I love water. This is the first place I lived in Texas that I wasn't around a body of water. I can't swim. But I love the sound of water. It's soothing. Sometimes it frightens me. But it's just something about water that brings peace to me.
- And you mentioned the music piece before you started the interview...
 - o There's what water looks like, what water sounds like, I was thinking about what water sounds like, because we talked about that music piece. I love music for all of the world. I can listen to a piece of music, and play it 20 different times, and I hear different things. I can visualize just different aspects. And a lot of times, it depends on what music I'm listening to. I relate it to something like how it makes me feel with the sun or the water, or the rain, how it makes me feel with the snow. I've been doing that since I was very little. So I would correlate with different tamper of instruments or chord progressions, with how it makes me feel in relation to something of nature
- That's very interesting. I'm very curious about the movie that you are about make
 - o I'm still in the process of putting out...I've been thinking of that since I was little. I used to fantasize that when I'm listening to music from Morocco, I could visualize, what would the sun be like, feel like, in that particular place in the world...
- Is there a particular music you can hear when you think about the sun beaming through the window
 - o I love music. When I think of the sun, the first thing that comes to my mind is the music from the island. For me music tells like it reminds me of

a person telling the story. They play a certain melody and it's like the person telling me the bulk of the story and hear their accompaniments and then people are adding their stories, and that's what the sun reminds me of, the sun reminds me of island story. The rain, more of sometimes the French accordions, sidewalk cafes, cappuccinos, something like that. Spring time, kind of sunlight, reminds me of Italy. I can visualize walking in some pastures next to a house that's draped in vines or something like vines.

- So you've been sunlight beaming through the window, we've been talking about water, rain and we've also been talking about music...have you had a project where you focus on your relationship with nature?
 - o No I have not. When I was a music major, I used to do calligraphy and so I had a lot of calligraphy pieces that reflect most of those summer stuff, and I don't know where they are at, but I have done anything with film. I have, if you go to...I am on Flickr, [redacted], it might come under [redacted]. A lot of my photographs are low-key. Some of them are artificial lighting, and some of them are natural lighting
- Anything else you want to say at this point
 - o I think Ill will go with the natural light. Hopefully Mother Nature won't let me down, because it's rainy. But I think I want to go with that. I have some ideas, but I'm not sure which way I want to go. In the timeframe that you need, hopefully I'll have something to show you, hopefully I'm in the right direction
- Oh yeah, with definitely what we talked about today, the natural light, the sun light, and also how music reminds you of natural images, I think all of these are appropriate from my perspective. I think the natural light is a fascinating. I was thinking about how, it fit's exactly what I'm looking for in a very unexpected way
- Hopefully I can pull this one off! Hehehe

Melissa Second Interview

- Thank you again for making this film. How was your experience making the film?
 - o At first, it was hard to hone in on exactly what I wanted to do because I knew I was dealing with light. And actually it could have been moonlight. But I wanted to do the sun because of the rays it produces, and that's why I opted for the sun, and I was praying to the gods that "give me the sun" because it was rainy at the time. And before I even thought of the concept of what I was going to shoot, I sat down, thinking of what I was going to say. So, it was hard. So, I just sat there and started thinking about what light means to me, how does it make me feel, and, since I am kind of spiritual, so I thought I would take that route, and the voice-over came

easy. And once I got that done, I had my son shoot the camera. Like I said, I don't want to be in front of the camera, but I was going to have my granddaughter, she's also 13, she had a teenage moment, and was like no no no so I was like, I got it, I have to do it myself so I got my son to do it, and so I gave him a gist of the concept of what I wanted to get, so he went on with that. When I found out I was minute or so short, I went oh god, ok, what am I going to do? At that point, I didn't have time to shoot something extra, and then I had a death in the family. So I said well let me look at the photo album, and do I have anything that reflects some of the images that correspond with the first part. Then the voice over for the second part, that just came over immediately. Because I started off, and I thought I was going to do a rhyming poem and I said, no. I'm going to start the first sentence as a rhyme, the first phrase as a rhyme and then switch, it probably broke every literary...

- It made a lot of sense
 - o And then I switched and just stream of consciousness of what I thought and that would connect to the original
- Yes, I thought the whole film had a very nice flow, I did notice the first part had a lot of pictures and images and the latter half was more moving images. So I noticed that, the whole theme and your voiceover definitely had the same ...well it came together
 - o The only thing is I wish I had more images. Because the second part was moving, my still images were too long. And with that, I didn't have enough to cut it to least make it moving. I meant to put the ken burns on it so at least it gave some fluidness so it could go to the next part, but I got to use what I have because I knew I had to go to get out of town next week
- No I'm glad you made decisions that fit your other logistical things that were happening in your life. Could you talk about what you liked about making this film?
 - o One, I liked doing things for other people. I just enjoy it, and when I saw that you had put a notice that you needed this, and it's for your school, something that you wanted to do in life. I thought, I got to help this person.
- Wow thank you
 - o I'm just like that, I like to extend help as much as I can. To someone who's striving to achieve something
- Thank you so much
 - o And then it gave me an opportunity to...because I was down at the time...it gave me the opportunity to release these depressed demons in me. So it gave me an avenue...

- What do you think gave you the opportunity to release those demons
 - o Well the voices overs that I wrote. I mean, I think I'd done pretty deep. And because I haven't written anything in a while, I was like I don't know if I can do this in this time frame. So when I sat down and I forgot about the time frame that I have to do it in, I just relaxed and just had a stream of consciousness concerning that entity of light.
- So it sounds like from the writing part, that was when you felt the opportunity to release those dark demons
 - o Right, exactly exactly. Now I think if I were to shot it myself, I probably would've had different images. And even though I didn't know what I wanted to shoot, I would've put myself in at least the atmosphere of where I wanted to be. Because I like to go out, because I'm kind of a loner, I like to go out and explore. And I always have my camera with me, so whatever I see, I would shoot, and since I didn't have that opportunity, I had to go for plan b.
- But I think I'm getting the sense that whether it's plan A or B, you wanted the same atmosphere.
 - o Yeah.
- And we're getting into this, but what do you think were the challenges of making this film?
 - o I think the challenges, besides the one I told you already, was trying to make sure that I covered the bases of what you needed. Because I understood what you wanted, but subconsciously I kept saying, do I really know, what you really wanted and needed? And that's where I had the most challenges, because it took me almost a week just to figure out what am I doing? I understand what you told me, I understood what I read, but could I get it out, and bring it to life?
- So when it was about the experience of making the film, starting to make it, write for it, is this product anything that Aki is wanting?
 - o Right, that's why I kept having thoughts. My husband and I, we're both very philosophical...so when I was explaining it to him, and he read it, he said, "I don't know if you doing the right thing." I said, I think I am! And he kept debating me on it. And that's why I had the second thought if I was doing the right thing. I thought, I'm just going to erase what he said, and I'm going to go with my gut
- Was the second thought mainly coming from your husband or was there any second thought coming from you?
 - o I think that it was a combination. Because I knew what I understood. And I grew up...I had a disability; I was in special Ed classes. They thought I couldn't speak at first. Because I wouldn't talk. I just wouldn't talk to

anybody, I had a reading disability, I would always be in the lowest reading class with the ESL kids and it wasn't that I couldn't read, it was my comprehension was so low. That's why I kept second-guessing. Because I'll read something and I'll read it again, and I have this thing where I kind of read a line, but the line shifts up and I'd be reading the same thing over and over and over again for me to comprehend things. Because I have to put a piece of paper there and go to the next line, so I re-read and write what I think to comprehend and then that helps me get past the hurdle, so that's why I was doubting myself, and so that's why I asked him, because I was saying I don't know why you married me because I'm...[laughs]...You got all the brains, but then I said, I'm going to disregard what he said, and go with what I think

- Because when we first met I was talking a lot about the research and the whole concept of light – I was even think of it that way, but it does fit my research, so I definitely did get the sense that we were on the same page
 - o Ok
- And I also experience what you had to experience in the past, that there would be doubts and also the nature of how I described my study, it wasn't a step-by-step process of this is what needs to be done so I understand that there was ambiguity there as well
 - o But I think you did that probably because you didn't want to put the person you're asking in a box. So you opened it up where they will feel free to feel like they don't have answer like ABDCDE...and it's more fluid
- Exactly
- So yeah, there's good parts, and inconvenient parts with that fluid definition of things.
- But let me reaffirm by what you made and what you spoke definitely does fit into what I was hoping for and I have a lot of gratitude and a lot of awe for what you have given me
 - o Thank you so much. Thank you.
- Thank you so much. So any other challenges that you had?
 - o I think that was it. Because the technical part, that was fine for me. And like I said, I just wish that I could have shot and that someone else do the thing because the way I shoot and the way I see things through my lens are of course going to be totally different from someone else I ask
- I would like to ask more about the film itself. Yes there is the voice over, and there is the lot of imagery of trees...I was wondering where that was first of all?
 - o Ok I don't know if you're familiar with the wells branch area? It's a park over there. It's located right in the area, the smack dead of all these

houses. I don't live out there, but my son lives across the street in some of the apartments. How these people live around this area, with this lake, and the ducks, and the birds and stuff, I think you can fish there. It was man-made, so I'm sure they stock it. But it's a running trail all around there. It's so brisk over there, I thought it was pretty. It would've been nice to do it now, because the leaves are turning colors

- Yeah that would be pretty
 - o But to display as much colors as I wanted
- Colors of the...?
 - o Colors of life. Whether it's flowers...but that's where it was filmed. Forgot the name of the park
- So in terms of choosing that park as your central location, you mention the color, could you talk more about reason behind the choice of choosing that park
 - o Well one is convenience. Because I was on the time frame working off of my sons' time frame. So he only had a limited amount of time. So we weren't able to go out. And venture out. So that yeah that was mostly why
- Was there any reason going to a park in the first place.
 - o Well I wanted to get somewhere that shows solitude. And that place came to mind. As opposed to a park with playgrounds, you have kids, and bunch of noise rattling in your head. So this one it just reminded me of some parts of it, like little Zen area, where you can sit and meditate
- And I might be assuming things but was there a point to that place being outside
 - o Yes. Because just the vastness that light...It succumbs everything. It's everywhere outside. You know, inside you only get filtered whatever. Whether it's blinds, cracks, open doors or something like that. It's limiting the wholeness that it produces. When you're outside, everyone's experiencing it, it's there for everyone to feel, and see. If you can see.
- There's also one shot of you being inside
 - o Right. That was supposed to symbolize my dark place where it sometimes it's hard for me to go outside, to experience the world, but I still want to have that feeling that light produces. That's why I look through the cracks of the blinds, so it could filter in. for me it was telling me, it's all right. It's all right, come on outside. You know. Come on outside to enjoy me. Don't just let me be filtered in
- And I definitely got that sense. Because you mentioned that in your voiceover too
 - o Right
- I was also thinking about your choice of quotes. One is the quote about the difference between the candle and the mirror. What was your intention behind that

- I knew that candle wasn't "natural light" but I just looked at it...I remembered I did a video for my father when he died. And when I was doing the video, as I was editing, it was just a picture montage. I had a candle sitting on the desk and I usually edit...I might sound quirky. But I usually edit with a mirror opposite of me. And I would just have it ...I just glance at it every now and then. And I did this looking into the mirror thing ever since I was little. I would just look at myself and say I'm ok I'm ok and it's not like I get it from the book "I'm ok you're ok" but sometimes I feel like I just don't fit in. so I would have a mirror there to remind me, I'm ok. So the light on the other side is just to me it symbolizes hope. Sometimes it depends on what position I have it. I can see the flames bouncing off the mirror to me.
- That's a very insightful thing. So both have value. There's the candle and the...and I also was feeling like, so the candle is the one that produces light. So it's kind of like the sun in that way. And also the mirror, it's not just a reflection of the light, the reflection gives you hope, thinking like I'm here, I'm okay
 - Yeah I have down days, but I'm okay. I have down days, but I'm here. I'm breathing. I'm experiencing all the senses. So be happy. You know there are people worse off than you. So why not be happy.
- Also speaking of senses, there's that breathing part in the beginning. You talk about colors, you talk about...and also having a perception about yourself through breathing
 - When I went to college, my first go around. I did this speech on color breathing. I guess it was too heavy for me because I just came out of high-school. And I saw I was somewhat into transcendental meditation and the chakras and all that stuff. And so I did this thing on color breathing. And I don't know, for me it worked. I think of color as I sit there, and I just imagine breathing what that color...what feelings it gives me. So that's where that came from.
- And speaking of meditation, there's a scene where it seems like you are meditating
 - Right right
- What was your intention behind putting that in?
 - Well I wanted to show the outside, and even though you have all the stuff going around you, you can find a place where you can just channel anywhere you want to be. And you have the sun touching you, just like kissing you all over, and you get these tingly feelings all over, so whatever is bothering you, maybe some kids playing in the background, you just let it go, and your body just starts relaxing

- And you talked about transcendental meditation. I'm not sure if that was transcendental meditation
 - o No haha
- I'm also thinking about the relaxation as well as the being out in the open world. I'm still thinking about the connection to god that you mentioned. We talked a little bit about that in the last session
 - o Because god is everywhere. So when you're out, for me it's like a child being outside at play. You're outside whether you're meditating, you're just sitting, or reading, or playing an instrument out in the open, god is all around you, watching you like a parent, and He's making sure that you're going to be ok. If you're meditating, you're trying to get rid of those bad demons that are in your head, He's there to touch you, and tell you it's going to be alright. Just relax and get the bad thoughts out of your head
- In terms of this film being about light, there's a connection there between god and light. Could you talk a little bit about that?
 - o Well, the Bible says in the beginning there was light. And then that's the whole creation that God gave us, and it starts off from there. And as time evolves, light evolves, and it grows, it's life. To me it's like everything. Because when you see light, natural light, it's God saying, "I gave you life, and life is light." And so that's how I see.
- So light is life. It's the energy that...
 - o That moves us and just makes everything grow. Spiritually, any kind of way. It's like one thing you need. Of course water. But those things you need to keep your energy inside you
- Yeah, the light. It definitely has a divine spiritual quality to it
 - o And I think that...I'm not really versed on other religions...but I'm sure that light is a part of everybody's religion in some kind of form
- And I'm also not versed in religions, other religions, but just by the virtue of light being a universal thing, it's a natural thing that is all around us.
 - o Exactly
- You're talking about being in control of light. This was towards the end when you are talking about depression. I was curious about what you meant by that.
 - o When I'm depressed, and you notice when I'm looking through the blinds, that's when I'm thinking that, I'm in trouble, I can't shut you off or turn you off by using my blinds. And that was when I was inside, and being inside also to me was a symbolism of being negative inside myself. So when I am in control of light, that's me controlling what I'm leading into. So when I say I'm in control, so I think. Had I'm outside, and then the light is penetrating. "No you cannot control me. I'm here. Let me in. so that's what I meant.

- Yeah there's you sometimes not wanting that. And then you kind of make a choice about how much of it do I have. And sometimes when you feel less depressed, or when you feel when you want to get out there, you do have a lot of it. But sometimes when you do feel sad or depressed, it's when you shy away from the light
 - o [Nods]
- And the last closing quote by ruby, could you talk a little bit about that
 - o I forgot.
- Yeah, so the quote goes, don't you know yet, it is your light that lights the world
 - o For me it was just saying, look here, don't you know that what I'm giving you, you are a reflection of me, and I'm a reflection of you. And you are what's lighting the world. My love, my light that I'm giving you is... I'm giving it to you and you're giving it back, and the world is shining with all these people that have the same light that I'm giving back
- I'm reminded of the first thing that you said about wanting to help me
 - o Yeah Exactly. So giving the light and taking the light. And shining, doing the act of glowing and shining, but also feeling the light from other people as well.
- The music was there
 - o Well the first music, Antonio Vivaldi, to me the music fit better. But it is a short piece. And I couldn't find anything that I wanted to play in the beginning to segway. And I didn't want it to be just images and voice. So when I listened to music, I listen to it a thousand times. And each time I listen to it, I hear something different. And so that's why Vivaldi piece worked, but when I had to regroup, I said oh my god, what am I going to do? Because I wanted something that was a slower piece, and thought provoking. And something that I can hear the inner voices. So like, you know the violins, they always get the praise, and then your bases, they always get the praise, but the inner voices are what really speaks to me. The inner voices, like the violas, the instrumentation that's in the middle. That's pretty much the support, the heartbeat, for me. That's why I said well I came more contemporary with Chris Bodi. And I didn't cite him. It's the way he plays...because he's in the smooth jazz genre. He has such a lyrical warm tone and the particular piece was muted. The way he plays, it's almost like someone's talking. And so that's why I chose that particular piece. It's this section towards the end. It's kind of hard to explain, because I tried to explain to my husband. When I listened to some of his songs, I like them to feel like they are telling me stories. Particular his instrumental. It'll go through whatever chord progression, and in the end it follows them, and then it kind of ends. And then it picks up with

another train of thought. That's why I was looking for something like that.
To carry this piece. And so that's how

- Sounds like you put a lot of thought into it. That's really great. How has this project influenced your well-being?
 - o Well I think it...I have this weird personality. I could be an introvert...but I could snap and I can be an extravert. And by doing this project, it helped me come out of that introvert stage...I can flip flop back and forth but by doing this project, it gave me hope that I can go do something else. Even though I know I could do it, it gives me reassurance, that validation, that I'm ok, I worked with someone I didn't know. I could go work with someone else too. So, I thank you for this
- Oh wow thank you for saying that. So was it about working with me that led you to do the extraversion direction?
 - o Yeah, working with you. And your project itself. Because I found it very philosophical and I love that. I love that. Because it makes you think beyond black and white words. It opens up things, inner feelings and just trains of thought that you would never think of in everyday conversations so I liked that
- What new trains of thought?
 - o It's just I didn't realize that I could be that spiritual. I know I'm spiritual, but I didn't realize that I could bring it out in me. Because usually if I write something, it's always depressing. It's always, woo, a downer. A Debbie downer. But I thought that what I wrote this time was positive. Even though it had mentions of depression. I think there was more hope that came out of it.
- Yeah there was reflection of depression but you also dipped down but the ultimate message was having that hope or that spiritual energy. So the theme of this film was natural light, your relationship with natural light. If you were to think about before making the movie, and after making the movie, how do you think that changed? If it did change?
 - o I think it's about the same. It just gave me the opportunity to bring it out in a piece. In video. Normally I would just have it to myself, but I was able to share what I actually think about everyday with someone else. With you, but I think more people will see it. It gave me the opportunity to share what I normally think
- Yes, the relationship with natural light has always been the same. It's not like something changed, something got better or worse, anything like that.
 - o Right it's just the ability to share it.

- And you're sharing it not by talking about it, I mean you did talk about it but you were showing it with other people too. Has the way you look at natural light, has that changed?
 - o I think as I get older, I think I appreciate it more. Because I always have this...I don't want to say this obsession with death. I'm not afraid of it. But being able to look at things, experience things, and soak everything. I don't take that for granted at all. I guess when I'm younger, yeah, but as I'm older, just knowing how light affects me is deeper. More true to myself
- Was there anything new to the filming experience that...
 - o Well I got to shoot with my new camera! I just got a 4k, and I love it, so I'm hoping to...I love this camera.
- [looking] My goodness
 - o Say about a year, it was like 1500 dollars, and this was my first project shooting it. So it was an honor shooting it
- Yeah, that's amazing. It looked really clean and crisp. It was beautiful. Thank you for showing me the camera. Can you talk a bit more about what it's like for you to share your thoughts, your beliefs
 - o Some people are really closed...I find them to be really closed-minded. They don't want to share too much about themselves. They put up this wall. This comb of silence that they only want people to come this far. I find myself to be transparent. Sometimes too much transparent. Because I open it up. And I don't have problems telling people I have problems. Because I think if I'm sharing something that I have a fault with, maybe I can help somebody else. So I don't have any problems talking to people. Saying that I have this problem, or that I'm good at this or not good at this. I try to keep it as truthful and as transparent as possible
- What effect do you think sharing this film had on you?
 - o [crying] I'm not sure but it's a good feeling. It's just a good feeling to me to be able to open up and just share what I have to offer. Whatever it is, if it was good or bad. I just liked to share. Sorry I'm such a cry baby.
- What's coming up for you?
 - o I just like to make people happy. I just want to help people as much as I can. In whatever capacity that I can. It just makes me feel really good.
[crying] Sorry
- Oh no. Are you okay?
 - o No I'm good I'm good.
- When you were saying that you like making people happy, was it me you were making people happy?

- You, and I made myself happy. I saw that my husband enjoyed what I did. And so it made me feel like I achieved something.
- Wow
 - Haha sorry
- This is a lot of ...I have a lot of good feelings that you felt good from this.
 - It was a good experience.
- Thank you so much. I'm out of questions, but do you have anything else to say?
 - No, I wish you all the well with your studies, and go as far as you can and if you ever need my help again, you could always contact me.
- Oh thank you so much.

Cassy First Interview

- Have you had any experience with making any kind of film or making any kind of art, with this topic or any other topic?
 - Not considerably, I mean I did a few things for classes but your very basic-level video editing on the computer. But I am someone who definitely enjoys taking videos or photos to document things and add them as reminders. And also my girlfriend, she's an artist, so she does a lot of personal expression through art. It kind of inspired me to do the same so I started writing poetry and photography just to try new ways of expressing myself. So this would be a good opportunity to do that.
- So as you are getting more into art and poetry and things like that through your relationship, what do you like about it? Do you notice anything about how you feel as you make art?
 - Sometimes I'm able to articulate in ways that I haven't been able to before. Like, hyper-reflecting on it and making it manifest itself in some verbal or visual form. Sometimes I discover something that I didn't even recognize was going inside a heart of mine, but I gave myself a second to breathe and release and express it. And it's fun! It's fun as hell. Sometimes I get to be really playful with it. Because when you're doing serious things like graduate studies, especially in something like public policy where it's very business all the time, it's nice to have something where I can be really playful and silly when I want to as well, along with serious
- Ok so yeah, there's the part of your life that doesn't have to do with art. Well I don't know about public policy, but it feels a little separate from art. Is it kind of an escape, just another way of expressing yourself?
 - That's a good question, I know for a lot of people it can be a kind of escapism. I don't see art as that. I think of passive activities like that, like watching movies for example, or listening music. Art for me is always more creative so that's an active activity vs. a passive one. So it's usually not for

escapism but definitely for self-reflections and self-expression. I feel like you're always really busy in the course of the day you don't really get the time to do that. And at home I have my girlfriend there, just having her there who I can just be so genuine to express myself to, and art is just another avenue. And because she's an artist, she helped me explore that more, and cultivate that, that interest, making the time for it

- So there's poetry that you do, what other things did you say you do in terms of art?
 - o Yeah, poetry is the main one. And actually when I was a little kid, I went through abuse as a child, and I found writing as an avenue to express myself. So growing up, I loved writing poetry, short stories, even writing essays in school, I still got excited about it, I'm like bring on all the writing assignments
- Wow that's awesome
 - o It comes in handy every now and then. But yeah, even now as a result, I found poetry, just because it takes less time to write a poem than it would a short story or a longer piece, I usually do that, because I love it but also it's a little bit expedite, so that's the main form these days. But also music, I was in choir for a long time, some times I would record my own songs or write lyrics and photography is another one that I like to do
- I feel like all of those things, and I'm not making suggestions, you don't have to if you don't want to, but film could be something that incorporates all of those things, so that could be cool. So yeah, it sounds like there's already a...I was talking with you about my making a movie about my relationship with nature had some therapeutic piece to it, and I'm getting the sense that, with writing and the pain that you must've endured in the past, that seems to have had some healing qualities. Is that right?
 - o Sure
- With that in mind, did you have an idea of what kind of film you're want to be making
 - o Yeah, I have lots of ideas so you have some good advice for me. As soon as you sent me the email with the video about your pet, I thought that was an awesome idea because I have a cat and a dog here and actually I just moved to [Texas town], I started grad school in August, and I had a bunch of little fur-babies back home, but then moving here we didn't so we decided we would adopt a few pets so both like older boys in the shelter, and they looked like no one was going to adopt and take them into their family, and I absolutely love them, the dog especially because you have to take them outside, you have to be active when you have a dog and it inspired us to go the parks more often, and things like that and see more of [Texas town] because it's so easy to not do that when you're so busy but one of the many

things that attracted us here was the all of the parks in the city and around it so he he's been a great incentive for us to go and explore, so I thought that'd be really neat using in the film – my dog and my cat as vehicles of how I explore the natural world

- Oh wonderful, I mean I'm not sure how the final films going to be, but that's kind of my thinking for when I made the film, so that's really cool. So you have a dog and a cat, what are their names?
 - o The kitty has a silly name, he's a 12-year old man named Jon
- Cool
 - o And our doggy, he's named Cody
- Yeah can you talk about your relationship with them, Cody and Jon?
 - o Yeah so we got Jon about a month after we moved here and we've been looking through different animal shelters online because we know we don't want to go to a breeder because they're maybe not the best conditions for the animals and it's so business like and we wanted to go somewhere where we could actually save an animals life rather than force a new one into the world and we wanted an older one that maybe looked like it wouldn't get adopted so we wanted to be that family that we could take them. And Jon he was this old 12 year-old who had this horrible case of deformity, had become anemic, lost so much blood, and he looked really raggedy and we were like this is the perfect sad-looking old man, and we took him and combed his hair back and he looks healthy and he's so happy, and he's a total cuddle bud so we got him and we were on the hunt for dogs, we were like it's [Texas town], we'll get to see the whole beautiful world here and it'll give us motivation to do that if we really want to, otherwise we'll end up sleeping in so it was kind of like one of those commitment devices you know, we knew our own psychology and we thought the dog will be a good fit. And he has been, he's an 8 year-old guy and we got him from the shelter as well.
- Sorry, I'm getting confused, your dog, Cody is the dog, right? And Jon is the
 - o The cat
- The cat, ok. I gotcha
 - o And he's been super friendly. Always Whenever we get a chance, we put him in a car with us, when we go to the store, she comes pick me up from school, we've seen a lot of different parks with him in the city, we've taken him to go visit our family in [hometown]. He's really an integrated part of our family, and like I said he motivated me to go to a ton of different parks that we otherwise wouldn't go
- I gotcha. Was it your first time having a pet?
 - o For me, no. Actually, literally the day after I was born my parents bought a pet.

- Oh wow ok
 - o Yeah, and they were like, we think it'd be great if they grow up together. My mom's always had cats so...for me, if anything, it was like this place would feel more like home if I had animals. But my girlfriend, she had a cat growing up but she never had a dog. She's like, you know, dogs look cute from a distance but they could be big and scary and I don't really know much about them so she was hesitant and she was actually the one who was in love with the dog between the two of us. She loves her. She is probably his alpha and I'm the one who's alpha for the cats so ironically ended up.
- Cool yeah. And you got them pretty recently right? Because you moved here recently. So this was in the beginning of this semester, this summer perhaps?
 - o Mmhmm yeah
- Ok and you got them as soon as you came here?
 - o Pretty much, we got Jon a month after we came here and Cody probably 2, 2.5 months, so we actually had 2 dogs before Cody, one that we were pet sitting, and they were like, well if you really like the dog, you can keep them, because they were moving, but just wasn't the best fit because it was one of those small dogs that was more like a cat, so we were like, she's cute and all but she's not the outdoor dog that we really want
- Ok yeah
 - o And the second dog was this really outdoorsy dog, with a big, pointer hunter type but he was a little too rambunctious and he tried to attack the cat so we were like well...so Cody's the perfect dog he's the outdoor dog but he's so sweet and gentle so he and the cat are cool with each other
- Gotcha. Oh so they get along
 - o Mmhmm
- Cool. What kind of places do you go to?
 - o All different types. In the city, of course places like Zilker are great places to take your dog to, we've gone to a few...I wish I could remember park names, we've been to all over the place, like South [Texas town], North [Texas town] and I was even going to take him to...I went to Lovett TX recently, there's really no reason to go there unless you have a family or friend there. It's actually ranked as the no.1 most boring city in America
- Really, I didn't know that
 - o Haha and I was like oh my god, it must be perfect to take the dog! It didn't end up working out because my girlfriend got sick but I always have the idea of, if we go somewhere, can we take the dog if so what do we need to do to make that happen
- Yeah, there really seems to be a big joy in taking Cody out. And you wouldn't take Jon out, is that right

- He just walks around the apartment complex but I think he was a stray cat for one because he has a notch on his ear that they do in [Texas town] specifically where they do a tag and release - so they get the strays, tag up, they don't have room in the shelter so they'll put them back in the streets after spaying them and neutering them just so they know now they out in the streets spayed and neutered. So you can tell that he's really curious about the outside, like sometimes he'll come up to the door and he'll stand there and look outside, look out the window a lot so, were always like if we could get a place with a yard, he'd definitely be like an indoor/outdoor cat
- Gotcha. What kind of roles would you say Cody and Jon have in your life
 - Oh man, um they 1200 remind me to relax. Usually when I get home, I spend 30-40 minutes just hanging out with them, petting them cuddling them feeding them walking them, and it's just relaxing, therapeutic for me, because each of those things help me relax, calm me down. Besides, they are so sweet, good company and they remind me to be considerate, because I'm responsible for their wellbeing. So it reminds me to take care of others and remain considerate and compassionate. It reminds me the importance of being teachers in our roles, and have patience in our teaching
- Oh interesting, yeah
 - And I'm a sucker for those short articles that you see on your Facebook page and there's this one I ran across recently which is "something all pet owners should remember" and you know it was a list of 10 things, like a BuzzFeed article and one of them is just Ingrained in the back of my mind, and it's so true: "the only world I know is the world you allow me to see." And it's so true with your pets. Their entire life is centered around you, their life could only be as big and diverse, and fun and beautiful as you allow it to be, and you empower them to be, and I really took that to heart and thought I want to take Cody everywhere so he can see some of the world and he can enjoy it
- Wow yeah you're kind of the guide, definitely the guide but also shaping their world and their interaction with it
 - No pressure haha
- Haha I mean it does sound like, not just them playing a big role in your life, but you're acknowledging that you play a pretty big role in their lives as well
 - For sure
- And also learning the virtues of taking care of them whether it's patience, or being considerate
 - Totally
- Cool

- And there's also that piece about...is there anything to the fact that, this might be a weird question but is there anything to the fact that they're not human beings?
- Well sometimes it makes it easier to ignore them, right
 - Sure. Because I'd be like, oh you know stop meowing Jon. Like Cody just calm down for a moment. Which of course with another human being, it would just be disrespectful. So I think it's easy to fall into that trap. But then on the flipside because when we think of dogs especially, but also cats. You got a few skeptics about cats out there though, but they are so sweet and loving to us. You know, I can't imagine them doing anything mean to us and they're so patient with us, I feel like they deserve that in return, you know. My pets have never done anything to harm me or my girlfriend so there's this obligation or mutual respect of I'm going to do everything I can to be respectful and kind to you as well 15:27
- Yeah there's the unconditional love coming from them, and there's unconditional love if you want to give that to them to.
 - Exactly
- Was I also hearing about, I was also getting the sense that it's easier interacting with them than human beings, like you don't have to think about how to phrase what to say to them, is there an element like that
 - Oh for sure I can be so casual around them, you can wear whatever, you can speak to them in baby voices, you can reveal to them your deep dark secrets, all those kind of things. I think they can also work kind of as a sounding board for you some times, like you just want to talk out your thoughts, or you want to feel your emotions without being judged, you know things like that, and I think that's really healthy too
- Right there's something to be said about, not having another verbal conversation with another human being. Something about perhaps just the presence of Cody or Jon
 - For sure, and I'm going through a phase where I joke that I'm teaching them Spanish, so I talk to them in Spanish now haha
- Hahaha that's awesome
 - It's been fun, my cat meows all the time so you feel like you're actually having a conversation and the dog is silent and I've only heard him bark once, but the cat, I'm like hey Jon, and he's like meow, how was your day Jon, meow, like he already meows on cue when you address him. Like it really feels like an actual conversation sometimes
- Yeah, I speak Japanese and I always wonder, because I talk to Kale both in Japanese and in English, so I don't know, to the extent that she is understanding what I'm trying to say, I'm like is she understanding Japanese and English? You know? Is she

bilingual? But basically, the point being language becomes a really interesting thing especially when they don't speak human language.

- Right, there's something to different languages in the intonations and inflections of them that pets might be more responsive to the way certain languages sound, it's probably a real thing, and there's probably a crazy study out there about it
- Yeah that's something that I'm actually interested in, so I got to look into. Is there anything that you wanted to speak to about your relationship with Cody and Jon, what that's like, what roles they have, any stories
 - Definitely with Cody, my girlfriend has...so I'll give you some context, we moved to [Texas town] in August, start of semester, that's because I had the contract with the government, where they were paying for my masters, and I'm going to work as a diplomat, a few years after. So this is awesome, this is exciting; this is a dream come true. The job I always wanted, very exciting to get into this education
- That's awesome
 - You know, it was an incredible moment for me. But for her it meant, if we wanted to stay together, she'd have to follow me to [Texas town] and then in the future, every couple of years I will be posted to a new country where we'd have to adapt to a new language and culture and setting, she'd eventually have to follow, so that's really tough. And there's pretty high divorce rates in the foreign service and things of that nature but you know, we're up for the challenge, and moving into [Texas town] is a great first step of that, we're having to move and my family is pretty close, they're in [hometown]. And so when she got here, she didn't want a job, she didn't wander around but she needed one to set a foundation and she ended up quitting and she's actually been unemployed now for the past month and a half which of course is emotionally challenging and financially very stressful and we happen to get a dog by chance at the same time that she quit her job, so there's a financial burden that got brought because he got sick in ways that the shelter didn't let us know which was pretty upsetting because you know there's a bit of deception there, but he's getting healthier which is good, 1955 we took responsibility for his well-being. ...?...So emotionally he's been so therapeutic for her, like I said, she's his alpha, they spent so much time together, he has made her unemployment much more rewarding. She has formed a strong bond with the dog gave her the reason to get up and out of bed in the morning even when she didn't want to and the reason to go out and interact with people even when she didn't want to, and you know it gave her something to do and look forward to when she felt so depressed and stressed so I'm so grateful for that. And I know if she realizes that. Every now and then when

she's gone I will say to Cody, you know, you really helped mom get through some hard times so thank you. Um so I think he has impacted her life in such profound ways

- Yeah and also it was you who said thank you to him too, there's a lot of gratitude you have for him for basically kind of like being a part of your relationship, would it be fair to say that?
 - o Yeah because he was there for her, when I couldn't be, because I had classes and things and none of her close friends are here, so he's in a lot of ways her first best friend in [Texas town], her first new best friend. And she's always tell me, I have these, I think about growing old together with Cody and of course we joke, he's already old man, he doesn't have that much longer but I could tell that she's fallen so in love with Cody and I know that even when he passes, she's forever from now on a dog person and I know that she sees how dog impact our lives whereas when she didn't have a dog she didn't have any sense of that
- Right right, yeah, it's a new encounter for her. Can I ask what her name is?
 - o Yes, her name is [Vanessa]
- Ok, and you got Cody and Jon around the same time, is that right?
 - o It's like a month of difference, so Jones was pretty jealous when a new baby came into the house, he's still like I thought I was your number one!
- One thing that I kind of wanted to ask about was you've been getting more into art and poetry and photography. Do you make art with Cody or Jon in them, whether it's like a poem about them, or do you write songs about them, take pictures of them
 - o Yeah, I mean definitely photos, you got to be a proud mama and take pictures and post them online. Um in terms of art, nothing explicit although me and my girlfriend we both like to express ourselves through songs so if you were to observe, we'd have no idea that you're observing us through the day in our apartment, we'd love to sing, we'll sing about what we're doing or we'll sing to each other and it's just silly you know, free form, doesn't care about being in tune, so the pets come into what we talk about, and that's what we sing about throughout the day, but growing up, I guess that I always had dogs and I always had cats and one point I had three dogs and two cats so a full house, lots of fur, but I wrote, I remember my first dog died so the puppy that they got a day after I was born, it was just so emotional and impact just like when kale was going to pass and I wrote a short story about it, and sometimes I still go back and read it and that's one of the most emotionally genuine things that I've probably ever written in my entire life probably because I was young and probably didn't have many filters but also the subject emotionally impacted me at 13 when you know that's maybe one of your first grieving experiences

- Yeah and it's interesting that you are talking about that, because actually if you watched my film, it is about kale dying two months into getting kale, her nose was bleeding so she basically had a tumor, or sorry, we thought she had a tumor and the vet was saying we might have to put her down and I thought I was going to lose her, but yeah the film gets into that but yeah I definitely relate with that feeling of grief and it sounds like the whole piece about cats and dogs playing a very important part of your life, it's not a new thing this time around with Cody and Jon, that's always been the case
 - o Yes
- And also growing up living with cats and dogs, did they have the same roles in your life, the whole piece about patience and being considerate...has that always been the case with you and your non-human friends?
 - o I guess it changes, for example, when I was little, for my first dog, I viewed her more as my aunt? Or my nanny? And Now I view my pets more as my kids like I feel like I'm the caretaker for them, whereas when I was growing up, in many ways, the animals felt like caretakers to me and I think it has to do with the fact that my parents were the ones who were feeding them and taking them to the vet so I didn't have that experience of pet ownership as a kid but I had the experience of having them as friends and watching out for me and things like that
- Yeah, definitely. I don't like the word ownership, but the piece about parenting or taking care of them, that plays a big role. But whether your pets are your nanny/aunt or children, it still sounds like they are family members
 - o Yeah for sure. And actually back home my parents have one dog and two cats, and I visited them over thanksgiving break and it's been such an interesting change in perspective, now being the caretaker, the main caretaker of my animals also being in the place in my life where I'm probably getting married in the next year, I definitely want to have kids at some point, you know all these big life shifts and my mindset where I'm going, I look back and my family home's flooded over the summer during memorial day weekend in [hometown] so obviously a lot of emotional and financial stress there and they moved into this tiny space and the dog, just like the humans, have been in a bit of a stress of the move, and probably empathetically sensing their emotions and being in a place that's a yard and my family hasn't been taking the time to give her the right food or take her on proper walks so she's gained so much weight and she looks so unhappy and unhealthy and upset and when I was first there I was just crying holding the dog, and I was like Annie, you deserve so much more than this, I know my family's stressed right now, but they're the responsible one's for you and they can't let you down because if they don't look out for you there's absolutely no one to do

anything so while I was there I had Cody with me, I took them on walks constantly, I was just telling her that it's going to get better and I texted my mom this morning that I need photographic evidence that you're walking Annie and I helped him pick out some new food so it was such an interesting thing because I was very aware I am now in the parenting role with a dog that I grew up with because I had her since I was eleven so I've seen that exact dog, the shift in the mindset

- Because you were the one who was making sure Annie was taken care of, but also this kind act of embracing her and the feeling of pain, and making sure that she is in the right path of being cared for by her other family members, that became a very important moment for you. And also they let you know that the way you felt about Annie is different from how you felt about her or from other animals in the past. The other piece that I want to ask you about is, we've been talking about cats and dogs in your life. The way I was relating to that was looking into beings that are not human, and how that plays an important role, and when you look at it that way, they are a part of Mother Nature. That's kind of how I see it. Do you see it in the same way, or would you not think of them as a part of a larger mother nature, or what do you think?
 - o Oh man. I feel like I compartmentalize mother nature to so many of the living parts, like the animal part of mother nature, the flora parts of mother nature and I do see them as quite separate although of course sometimes when I take Cody to the park, I think that, man what would it be like if Cody was a wild dog growing versus the life that he's had because of all the domestication and breeding we've done to dogs over time and of course you can go even further and muse about when human beings were wild creatures out there, so it's interesting to think about what Cody's ancestral past would be versus my ancestral past in connection with mother nature and how similar they might have used to be. In fact they probably started out similarly and now they diverged a lot and now they've become more similar because were living in the same home, eating similarly designed foods in some ways, walking together in unison and peace, and it's just awesome
- Yeah because we're not like hunting with them, I mean, people I know aren't, and there's a sense in which we don't have the same kind of relationship than we did but the closeness that we have with them is still there and as we domesticated them they're like you said a very big part of our family. So it sounds like there is that distinction between flowers and trees and things like that, but there are ways in which dogs and cats can be a big part of nature
 - o Yeah

- Speaking of nature, one part of what you said was you like taking Cody out. Is that a unique new thing for you or have you always liked going outside or what's your history like, with going outside or
 - o So I guess an important context is that I was born in [hometown] and raised in [hometown] so you got a really big city that's not as green as [Texas town] so I was definitely raised with city as the norm rather than nature. Of course being in a house with a big backyard...so we would have apples and cranes in our backyard, you know we'll see turtles and fish and things like that, so even though in the city, we would still have exposure to animals and a nice big backyard. But a little more social context is that my parents are both obese and aren't physically active, and are very much so creatures of indoor habit's, they don't like to go out and so as a kid, that's of course the life I knew because just like Cody's life depends on me, that's all I know as a little child, it's very much the same with your parents and so I grew up as an obese child, I never really went camping, my parents never really took me to the park and then came a point in my life when I hit puberty, when I was like I want more from life than this. I want to be healthier, I want to be going outdoors and physical activity and so I took it to my own hands, joined sports teams to get fit, of course, you're spending more time outdoors and in high-school I got involved with the environmental protect crew and did things like built proper fencing, or weed trails or remove invasive plants and species and I think the height of my being in touch with nature was, I graduated high-school, and I was like this is a very big transition in my life, I like to do a month-long volunteer crew elsewhere, just have the experience before life is even more academic, and so I spent a month in the state of washing working on the chief joseph dam, and I was doing the same work of like trails and water ways and planting trees and moving species...and spending a month where you have no contact with the outside world and you're in touch with nature and you're trying to make her healthier. It was really beautiful and refreshing
- What about it, do you think?
 - o I think a lot of it was the pace of life, not having to deal with all the stresses of things like homework and commuting and things of that nature. Being in a small community, so there were 8 of us in the crew, and so we were all together, and that was my family when we were all there, the fresh air, seeing the stars. Cooking was nice, very simplistic cooking. The animals we'd get to see. We were right alongside the river, so we got to swim in there. All that. Even across the way, there was...so one side of the river there was a park, and on the other side a native American reservation, so at night you can hear the music from afar, we'd shout along the way, say hey. It was a really cool experience because you don't like, because you're not supposed to band? In

the cities. Yeah feeling like I'm doing something good for nature versus sometimes in your daily life you feel like 'man. I'm doing something that's really shitty for nature.' I'm sure I try my best to conserve water and to recycle but I know in my daily life, everything from driving to this and that, it's hurting her and it's making her bleed. The least is dedicate my life solely for doing good for her

- Yeah, was that a discovery on your end, where you had this realization – I don't know if you can pinpoint where you felt like man, I'm hurting nature...was there a moment when you started to think about wow we have to do better than this?
 - o Yeah I think it was, so throughout a year before, I did that summer, I did that local and regional stuff, so throughout [hometown] and Texas and I just learned so much. I never had a huge focus on environment, but I saw this opportunity as man, I'd love to learn, this is such a great opportunity. So I just kept learning about all the different ways we sometimes do bad to nature, and there are ways in which we are empowered to do good, so through all of our projects basically, I went and do things in the city as well as volunteering my time outside of the city to make it better and I think a lot of hit me when I was on the month-long crew, because that's what my life was dedicated to 24/7 essentially. And I remember coming back and thinking, the striking thought was, it feels weird to sleep inside these walls with manufactured colors, and manufactured lights and it feels so claustrophobic and separate from everything else.
- Yeah, that's a really, I could really feel that sensation. It's also interesting that I usually don't feel that way, when you're used to
 - o Right, the concrete?
- Right exactly. So this was a month long trip, when was it again, in your life?
 - o It was right after I graduated high-school.
- Ok gotcha gotcha have your feelings about being out in nature changed since then? What has it been like since that month?
 - o I think my consciousness is still the same I'm like...it drives me crazy sometimes, so I'm very rigorous when it comes to recycling for example, I've also, I've never owned a car, I always use public transit because it's a little bit better. I love how [Texas town] for example, you have to bring your own bag, and ideally all those studies may be actually undermining the idea that is helping but you know not having the plastic bags at the stores, I'm so down with that, and [Texas town] just seems like a green city generally and all the spaces that they really try to maintain naturally, as opposed to imposing. And [hometown] our biggest park Kermit Park is totally man-made, manufactured, whereas in [Texas town] they have a lot of built in nature that they're now trying to preserve. But a lot of that state and also my love for making sure I

spend a week or month to some sort of park, because in the state there's a lot of natural parks so...but the one thing I still want to really improve on is my own survival skill in nature. I feel like when you're in nature and you see all the things you're not capable of doing, you realize how out of touch you are with your basic animal instincts

- Yeah
 - o I feel like holy shit, how could I survive here without being able to make fire, without my tent to keep me safe
- And that kind of makes me think about, you use the word "nature" right, and there's like nature as in the plant behind you, or the nature as in a golf course, but there's nature as in the untouched land. When you think about nature, what kind of places do you think about?
 - o Um I think definitely parks, I think that's definitely the first one
- Yeah. The parks that you go with Cody and...[Vanessa]?
 - o Yes, nice
- Yeah let me ask you the question I asked you about Cody and Jon – what kind of role does nature play in your life?
 - o Probably smaller than I would like it to. The main one is honestly seeing parks as relaxation and recreation so when we go camping for example, or when we take the dog out, or we have a picnic, that's what I would say a majority of the interaction with nature. Although in my career I'm going into, it's very much so a generalist group, I mean within the UN there's different types of officers. I want to go into the economics officer, where there's a lot of work on investment, trade for example, there's a whole portion of it that's called ESTH or Environment science technology health and that's the kind of economic diplomacy I want to go into so for sure in my work I want to work on things like environmental sustainability. It won't be my main focus but it will be one of my core tenets
- Gotcha, gotcha. So you kind of prefaced that with your relationship with nature or the role of your nature being smaller than you like it to by having it be projects like that, or having it be a part of your career. Are you hoping to have it bigger than it is, is that what you meant when you talked about your career being about sustainability?
 - o For sure, by addressing all sorts of economic issues will not only help economic issues but also so many other things, because that's tied to scarcity of resources, that's tied to urban planning, it's tied to agricultural production, they are so multifaceted and complex, and that's one thing I'm excited about my career is you're supposed to be a generalist, so you get to see all of these things cross each other and hopefully find a solution all at the same time

- So it's kind of infused in your career. I mean it's not exactly, and I'm not getting the sense that I want to make nature a bigger part of life or that you want to save the planet, but definitely nature is a big part of what you do, is that right?
 - o For sure I think it's one of those things of, no matter what career you go into, you can think about ok, my job or my business or my department, how will that affect nature, and I want to make sure that however small or big that effect, it's more positive one than a negative one, so I think in any career you can always have that mindset. And in my career it won't be the main focus, but it will still be a major part of it. I will be working on environmental issues
- Gotcha. Cool. Yeah let me see if I left out any questions
 - o Sure
- When you were out there in the park with Cody and [Vanessa], what are your feelings about it, how does it make you feel
 - o I guess I feel calm, refreshed, sometimes it feels a little romantic, you get to hold hands and walk through the park, she really loves nature, she's someone who loves camping, and she's really being into found art with like photography for example. A lot of her art also centers around flowers and incorporating that into the design and it's cool to experience that with her
- That is cool, yeah so definitely a piece of romance in there but also having some real relaxing, calm values in there
 - o She actually gets on my case, she's like I like flowers and I'm like I know you like flowers. I have this whole thing of I never pick wild flowers or plants, because it's this whole idea of you see something that's beautiful, so you want to keep it, you want to have it. But as soon as I pick it, I kill it. But I think that's a philosophy you can apply to a lot of your life. But quite literally with flowers, so she's always playfully upset that I don't buy her flowers but when I go to the park I'm like here I'm bringing you flowers, I'm bringing you to them, versus them to you.
- Yeah there's the act of picking them up, and picking them apart from where it's from and now it's this thing that you have, which makes it different from the thing that is planted in the ground
 - o Totally
- Maybe I'm asking the same question. What impact do you think nature has had on you?
 - o I think majorly two things one is that calmness, and the other is reflection. Because as soon as you get away from all the things in your daily life, and all the responsibilities and the pressures which I feel like I'm able to do out in nature and there's not really the reminders of all the...and I want to get perspective when I'm engrossed in all of it.
- Ok

- And I think it's really important
- Yeah, absolutely. I was kind of going back to how we talked about art and there's that public policy and art comparison and I guess I was seeing that as a parallel to concrete and nature comparison. I don't know if you feel the same way, or in the sense that it's something different that I could do.
 - I think too with public policy, it is inherently man-made. Our policy is man-made, our entire infrastructure is created by men, and you go out to nature, although parts are obviously preserved by men now, you're going to this thing that was before men, and not the creation of men, so it feels interesting to go back to that when my life here obviously in this city is manmade, what I'm studying is inherently man-made, compared to psychology which is inherently human
- Yeah this is my story, but thinking about how much psychology is focused on what's happening with us internally and not so much about how the relationship that we have with other people...I mean a lot of psychology is about that, but only a certain part of it has to do the relationship that we have with non-human things or like nature, and so yeah, that's why I'm doing this. Ok so we don't have to keep recording, but I was also thinking about if you had questions about the film, especially after this conversation, if you had questions or thoughts about the film
 - Sure. So I guess in terms of like if there is any sort of particular style or content that you think would be really helpful to your study. I was thinking inherently obviously like you know maybe filming some scenes of us in the park, maybe even doing things like quasi interviews where [Vanessa] interviews me or I interview her about our experiences with our pets, or our dogs, or like silly moments
- Yeah I think that's really awesome and I think that'd be extremely appropriate for the nature of my study. But that's definitely true. But also I think in terms of if you're thinking of making a documentary, you don't have to make it a traditional documentary where there's interviews, but in my film for example, it was just narration and images with narrations and you don't have to do it that way if it doesn't feel right for you, but when I was talking about blending poetry and music and photography together, there was that moving image of Cody and Jon, or moving image of you and [Vanessa] and Cody walking and then you reading poetry over that, I think that's another way to put them together, or another way to think about the art that is the film. So what you were saying about poetry and how that's a more expedited process than writing, I think film could be both dense narration and there's a thesis, it could be that. Or it could also be fluid, it could be something less direct than paragraph conclusion that kind of thing. It could also be more open to interpretation kind of thing, and I think it allows more freedom in making it what you want. So I think those are some possibilities. So basically you have the freedom, and

also don't feel restricted by me in making the form of it in any kind of unique. Really, if it is about nature, and if it's between 5-20 minutes long, that's really what I'm looking for. Any thing else you want to add before I stop this?

- Maybe, I'm trying to think of any valuable content I can give you. When [Vanessa] and I started dating, we kind of joked about what if we got a plant as "our plant, so I ended up getting a moon cactus, a grafted moon cactus, which is supposed to be low maintenance, we don't have to water them too often, it could be indoor or outdoor, we had a serious attachment to that cactus, we named her Luna, because she was a moon cactus, Luna being moon in Spanish, we even took her on a two week road trip we did throughout southern US, we took pictures with her, all of our destination, and when she died we were like, "oh is this symbolic of anything?!" kind of jokingly but also we were like this is eerie, so we buried her in the backyard and I got another moon cactus on valentines day later on and that poor guy died and we still have plants today and I think that's helped something that remind us of nature inside our house and on our patio...but also our first cactus in particular, it was very integrated into our relationship especially like our experience in the road trip was one of the adventures we had when we felt so in love each other and that cactus was a part of it. We probably just sound odd to most people
- Well there's that piece where you feel like, is this an odd thing? Am I personifying the cactus, but there's also the reality in the fact that we can look at a cactus as a person too, this could be a part of the relationship. And this speaks to how much it can be, how much they can be a part of human relationships, or relationships period. So thank you for that story. Anything else?
 - Yeah I'm trying to think of some more content, because I did a whole project when I was interviewing, and I'd be like, damn it, I could have asked that...yea can't think of anything else. But looking into the future I definitely want to improve my relationship with nature and I have a lot of camping trips in mind so. I bought a hammock yesterday
- What did you make a hammock?
 - Yeah
- Wow you made a hammock
 - No I bought a hammock,
- Oh I would've been like haha that's cool. You're going to take it out on your camping trip
 - Yeah I hope so. We got our tent now. We got our hammock. We got our doggy, what more could you need
- Cool, I'm going to stop this now.

Cassy Second Interview

- So how was your experience making the film?
 - It was a little frustrating at first, actually, just for very small reasons. I was like, I will do it with my iPhone, the quality's good, all of that, and it turned out great!" and I took another and it said it was full so I went through and decided old photos and everything...and it was still saying it was full so I was like oh my god no! We're going on the camping trip today, the phone is rebelling. But then [Vanessa]'s phone's ended up. Although the phone is not as good of quality, it ended up working out. So it started off a little rough, but yeah after that it was really simple and easy with the phone. It was nice because it was really portable and when you're hiking and camping you don't want something that's valuable because you're going to drop it, or you lose, it goes into the water. So that was good I really enjoyed it just getting to be an observer, if you see that, you'll know that I show up once when I'm picking up dog poop
- Yeah I saw that, I was wondering if that was dog poop
 - It definitely was. Very smelly doo-doo. But yeah I just got to chronicle really [Vanessa] and Cody walk together. And I think I told you when we first met up, their relationship was really important one for her, and one that I'm really grateful for. So it was nice to kind of being the observer rather than the participator and seeing the relationship and seeing how Cody is experiencing the camping trip. And the other two girls were there with us, one goes to school with me and the other is her girlfriend so we all planned this camping trip like a month or a month and a half or so, they don't have a dog so they love hanging out because they love to be with Cody. So yeah, it was a fun time
- So the decision to use the iPhone for that, you mentioned some technical benefit's like it's portable was that the reason or was there any other reasons for using the iPhone for video recording?
 - I think the main thing was convenience. We had the technology, it was portable, it didn't have to worry about getting something from someone else, with the library for example, I ruin it, it wasn't oh there's a beautiful moment happening! I need to go get it and flip this open and turn this on and zoom it in properly, you know, so that was nice. Because with the dog you can't be like Cody, wait, go back there, and do this again so I figured just in terms of the speed of being able to use the phone as well was a real benefit.
- Gotcha. There's not a lot of set up required. And also you wanted to take some candid shots, is that right? There wasn't a lot of staging involved
 - Exactly, I was like, oh this is such a beautiful moment, let me just sneak away...

- Awesome, I'm getting the sense that it was fun. I mean it was definitely frustrating at first so there was the frustration. So let me ask specifically – you mentioned the fun piece, and also being the observer. Was there anything else that you liked about making this film
 - o I think it made me think about the kind of moments or images that I wanted to capture, which sort of makes you inherently reflect on what I am valuing about this camping trip, what I am valuing about the nature around me, what I am valuing about the dog and Vanessa and their relationship. Because I went into it with the mind of these are the moments that I want to capture. Whether they happen or not, I'm not sure, but if they do, I will make sure to pull the phone out and get some footage, so yeah, it forced me to reflect and be intentional about what I wanted to make sure and capture
- Awesome. Yeah, so you mentioned that there were images of what you wanted to shoot, and then there were things that you ended up shooting. Could you go into what those differences were? What was planned?
 - o For sure. I knew I wanted to capture the different element in nature so, very simply make sure to get some shots of the trees, of the water, of the fire, the sky, one thing I didn't get to capture, and that was honestly because it was below freezing weather, starting around 7 pm, it was so dark outside. She doesn't have like a new smart phone, her phone is pretty ancient technology, it doesn't have flash function so when it got dark outside, I wasn't able to capture anything effectively, and then you know the dogs slept with us inside the tent, and we had some hilarious moments like at one point, a huge pack of coyotes was traveling through, and of course I'm freaking out, she's freaking out, but the dog, who was deaf, can still sense that the coyotes are there so he starts freaking out, and coming over to cuddle with us to hide his head, and we actually had this little lamp at the top of the tent that we fixed, and we turned it on and the little light calmed him, just like a child you know. But none of that, I couldn't capture any of that because of the light changed to charge the phone overnight. So in terms of stuff I would've liked to show, because I think you could watch the video and you would have no idea that we spent the night because there's no night time footage. So we really only got the daytime hikes and into the evening, some fire and stuff like that
- I mean just because it was a camping trip and it was outside there's no light to show what you want to record, like that seems really hard to do
 - o Especially because we were like, I think we want to make it silent to showcase Cody's, what his experience is, so if we have night time footage we can't experience anything and you can't hear anything

- I could see how that's difficult. What was some footage that you were able to film that you didn't think to film in the first place?
 - o I'm not sure, I didn't go in with a really clear roadmap at all. Because we weren't even, I've never been to this park before, we just kind of played it by ear like ok we'll give it a run? This time, you know, we knew we were going on trails and we'll cook some dinner. And more generally, I wish I'd gotten more footage. In terms of things, what was the question again?
- Sure, maybe it was a confusing question. What were some of the shots that you got that you didn't plan before?
 - o Well the dog poop one. That was for sure. And then I think some moments for example, I was just going to the tent for something and [Vanessa] went over to pet the dog by the fire, so you know I just pulled out the phone and I just captured. So a lot of it was, like I had it in general, obviously I want to get the campsite and what people are up to but a lot of it was spontaneous, like this is a great moment to capture so none of it was really thought-out, like you guys stand there and hold this map...it was more like I know these things will happen and when they do, I will kind of found-art it, like it's happening, capture it
- Yeah, so what do you think it was that pulled you towards capturing them? What was special about them?
 - o Hmmm I liked shots that were more interactive. I mean there were some shots that were just trees and the sky, and even then there's movement, some sort of movement happening. So I like shots with movement I think because in the end, it's all about your relationship with the dog and the people here so capturing movements where different actors were colliding
- Yeah, like you said there's more interaction going on between people, between characters, between Cody and others, yeah. The other piece is that when you were talking about, you were thinking about it had you reflect on the things that you value about the relationship as an observer. What were some of the things that you value about the relationship as you made the film?
 - o Just going on a trip – this was our first camping trip with him, like we've taken him to parks before, and sometimes on hours-long hikes, but this was the first time actually spending the night and having the fire and all those things, so I really appreciated how calm he stayed but despite the coyote fiasco. But around fire he didn't freak out at all, he was patiently being fed, he treated our hikes just like walks around our apartment complex, you know he's never an aggressive dog, he's just calm and steady and loyal and I was reminded of that during this trip when there were so many elements that could shock him or scare him or distract him. And he was just Cody, he was just solid.

- Yeah that's something that you like about him, that he's loyal and calm. I might have heard this wrong. Was there anything that you found out that you valued about your relationship with [Vanessa] while you were making this film?
 - o Yeah I think I appreciated her working on it with me, in the sense of here I am, probably being more frustrated than need be with my phone not working, she was like honey, calm down. Here's my phone and here's how you use it. This will work. Trust me and like being so willing for me to so organically film her because some people were like I don't know if I want to be a part of this, or I don't look good in that shot or this is annoying but she was like very supportive the whole time and really made sure Cody was taken care of the whole trip. I mean he's a baby to both of us, but As you can see in the shots, throughout the whole entire thing she was constantly interacting with Cody, checking on him and then overnight I had very ill-prepared for the freezing weather and of course the dog was freaking out and she was just a calming force for both of us babies, and so that was really nice, really nice, because at every task, I think I'm a more responsible adult type, but when it comes to those kind of things she's always the rock for both the dog and I. and I was reminded of this.
- That's awesome, that's awesome. I have a more basic question. What made you decide to center the film on Cody?
 - o Yeah versus, maybe the trip itself? And like hanging out?
- Yeah,
 - o I think ...for me I do enjoy for example going to the park, I do enjoy the sunshine and hanging out, maybe reading a book or so. I really enjoy, and maybe this is the extravert in me I really enjoy experiences with other people. One of those is just to add some layers of interactions and complexity and dynamics of the experience but it also creates a collective memory around that experience, because, actually I get this from my dad collectively – really poor memory functioning so short-term stuff I'm completely fine but long-term stuff I have a really hard time actively recollecting. And a lot of things that happen really quickly fades. It's something that I freaked out about, personally. You know, longevity. And [Vanessa] has one of the sharpest memories there ever, so generally speaking when I have a memory with other people it helps me remember and holds me accountable because they share that experience with me and although Cody cant talk, he cant hear. It's the whole idea: interacting with another creature, and it brings another layer to the experience as well, just like collective memory. And usually when Cody's there [Vanessa]'s there too. Sort of like they're packaged together. I get to experience this with

both of them, I know Cody brings a lot of joy to her. When he comes along too.

- Yeah there's a lot of significance, not just Cody, but what Cody brings to the relationship with [Vanessa]
 - o Yeah, he's a part of the family. It's a family trip. It wasn't just a romantic getaway with a dog
- Would you have included – what was your cat's name?
 - o Jones!
- Jones! Yeah, Jon. Would you have included Jon, if you could?
 - o Yeah totally. He'd just meow the whole time. Actually, we've been talking about him a lot lately. He, I think in previous homes, was an indoor/outdoors cat. So he's constantly in a window cell looking outside. He tries to sneak out. And he was a stray at one point, he's got a notch of a tiger Lilly? Like he's out and they grab you, spare you, put you back out in the streets. So he was at one even just a stray cat. So we always joked that you know, we should take him to one of the cat beaches. We'll throw him in a box and bring him with us. I'd definitely would have, but it's probably not ever going to be possible but I included him in the start of the film because, Jon! You're our family too. Even though you cant come.
- Yeah I got the sense that this was your home. And you were including all the people who live in there.
 - o Exactly yeah.
- So you mentioned the piece about the phone situation and its capacity was frustrating...were there other challenges to making this film?
 - o Yeah I think sometimes there'd be a moment, and then I was really living in the moment, and id be like, ah, that would have been great to capture
- Oh gotcha
 - o I was just so consumed by the moment itself as a participant rather than an observer so there were moments like that made it a little difficult. I think it would've also been nice to if, for future endeavors to have at some point, the other people on the trip take the phone and film it from their perspective and film what they thought were awesome moments. I think that would add another richness to it and more perspective. But in this case I was like, I want to focus on my relationship with nature. But it would've cool to flip it and give [Vanessa] the phone and see what she films
- Yeah so that it's not just about you, and it's about others, and you can see how it's different and you can compare contrast. See the intersections.
 - o Exactly yeah. See the intersections.
- Yeah, so, how has this influenced your well-being, if it had any impact?

- It has. I thought it was really fun afterwards to look at the footage. Because like I mentioned I have a really poor long-term memory. So I'm one of the worst people unfortunately to take photos or videos of things. Like I don't instagram or snapchat. If things were posted on my Facebook, it's usually because other people took a photo and tagged me. But I recognize that that's probably something I should do more just to counter, you know, my body's degeneration when it comes to memory. So I was really grateful that this project propelled me to finally make a footage and have some sort of captured footage that I can always look back on
- Ok gotcha. So basically memory that you can go back to. What new things did you learn about yourself by working on your project?
 - I think I've always enjoyed trying to capture moments like the photography for example, or via poetry like trying to explain a moment with words. And so, I really like using the film medium to do the same. And you know images really speak for themselves in a lot of ways. So, that was fun, getting to do something artistic. I think I told you this last time, I'm in a school where there hasn't been any classes that intersect with art. Policies are very "practical." You know, it's sort of a profession where you don't delve into more artistic ways of thinking so it's always refreshing to do something like that
- Was it the same thing as writing poems? Or was it different? And how so?
 - Yeah I felt my role as someone trying to capture something was similar, but filming felt more co-creative, because I wasn't really dictating what was happening. I was really capturing the idea of found art with film. The world is giving you something beautiful already, and you're trying to capture it, showcase it to others
- Ok yeah like you said, this showcasing – it's a showing of what's already there as opposed to creating something from a blank slate? Is that what you were talking about?
 - Yeah
- So how has your relationship changed as a result of making this movie, this could be about Cody, this could be about [Vanessa]. Or just nature in general?
 - I think it reminded me to keep my eyes open and look around a bit more. This is kind of a tangent but last week, because of the nature of my school, I've been staring at my computer screen so so much that my eyes have been watering and they're twitching and my girlfriend actually sent me an article about eye exercises you should do to avoid that. I was like gosh this is so crazy, is this what my life is coming to...I'm so sick and tired of staring at computer screens and killing my eyes. I felt very upset about it this week as a culmination of just like the last year. But it kind of ties into

the whole idea of look away from work look away from that focus, look away from the duty every now and then to look around you, at the trees, the sky, your dog, your girlfriend, all these beautiful things surrounding and camping is something that isolates you from your work in a very literal and metaphorical sense, and you just get to be, you're in that space, you can consume all of it with your eyes, your ears and all your senses. And with it makes you intentionally do that especially the visual aspects. And so I think it reminded me to keep doing that, especially with the visual aspect and so I think it reminded me to keep doing that and gain newfound appreciation for that.

- For the visual side of things
 - o Yeah just in general, experiencing your surroundings. Because I could've gone there and been like ok I'm just going to focus on starting the fire, I'm just going to focus on the marshmallows, I'm just going to focus on walking the dog properly, I'm just going to focus on setting up the tent. Thinking about it in terms of action items versus thinking in terms of a holistic experience with your senses versus what I'm just responsible for. Does that make sense?
- It does. It's more than just tasks. There's more of you learning to appreciate just seeing things. And in this case, there was no sound, and that was intentional too. And you can't capture the smell because it's a movie.
 - o Well. One day. Hahah
- Haha but definitely with the visuals, it encourages you to be mindful of what you can see out there.
 - o Mmhmm
- Umm do you think your relationship with nature has deepened as a result of making this movie?
 - o I don't know if it's deepened as a result of the movie itself, but it was hard for me to de-couple the movie-making from the actual camping experiences in some ways, since they were intertwined. But, I think going on the camping trip was definitely refreshing because I haven't gone camping for a long while since like last Valentines Day, actually, so it's been almost a year. I've been hiking and all that plenty but there's something about the actual committing for whole 48 hours of your life to nature or in nature, with other people. Especially before the Spring semester started. So that was really good and I think the filming part of it just gave it, like it was another layer to it, it made the experience even more rich. And it made me even more mindful of the things I was experiencing. I think that was important.

- Ok and we've been focusing on relationship with nature as a whole, how about your relationship with Cody, how about your relationship with [Vanessa]? Have they deepened as a result of making this movie?
 - o Yeah once again, it honestly had to do once again with the dogs, similar things that happened with nature. Because they were constantly the object of my observations, the central object of my observation, it made me really aware of how calm and steady and loyal...like the video allowed me to focus upon all the beauty of the nature and great qualities of my dog. I think that was really the value of it, like zooming in on the dog, once again both literally and metaphorically and focusing in on that. And in terms of [Vanessa] of course, the same sort of theory applies to her as the subject of the film but also just her support and abating the frustrations of the phone and nighttime and all those things
- Well thank you. Some specific questions. Was there a meaning to the fish oil...that shot
 - o Um not some sort of really deeply profound thing. I just wanted to capture, "this is his sustenance," I suppose. You got to have a hearty meal, you got your food bowl your water bottle and the fish oil is like one of his many medications he takes like 7 or 8 pills a day now because he's got his horrible skin allergies that exacerbated during the trip
- Oh ok
 - o Yeah, so gnarly. So fish oil was one of the unprescribed things. Just keeping skin a little more fresh, so I guess in essence it was trying to capture the things he needs to live and so the fish oil is more symbolic of like generally all the medication he needs to take
- Gotcha
 - o Tying that into the overarching thing is, here's this boy that's old and he's got a lot of issues that we weren't expecting when we adopted him but are more than willing now to throw the money in because we love him so much, and he's so loyal to us, that all we can give in return is to be loyal to his health, and you know his happiness so I guess maybe you can interpret it in that sense
- Ok yeah, this was a piece of his life. This was you introducing us into life of Cody
 - o Yeah exactly
- Ok would you say the same thing about...the shot with the empty bowl? I assume that was a bowl of food? But I could be wrong
 - o Yeah it was his water bowl, his food bowl and fish oil I think
- Ok gotcha. So the same reasoning, different aspects of his life
 - o So we tried to have some human perspective, my perspective watching and some that was like Cody's perspective and throughout the day these

are the things that I see he's doings and here are the things that he's seeing and doing

- Ok gotcha. Yeah. Actually let me ask about the big decision that you made, to have the whole film in mute. You had talked a little bit about the reason behind that but if you wouldn't mind elaborating on that?
 - o Yeah totally so at first we were like there's a lot of random noises that are going to be in the film that aren't really of value adding and if we mute it, it would be completely silent which would be true to the spirit of how Cody's experiences, then we thought about putting in some sort of ambient music but we decided we would go with the complete mute because we want to add Cody's perspective in, some of what we talked about showing the food bowl and all that because he's still having a blast being Cody even though he can't enjoy any of the audio elements of this experience, so I guess showing his connections to us doesn't require sound and showcasing our connection to him shouldn't either. It should be evident in the visuals that you're experiencing in the film. Because in the end, he doesn't bark at all. He's a very silent dog every now and then you know he'll give a little squeeze, like hehehe. Yeah so we thought that would be a cool
- Yeah, it sounds like a statement, it sounds like a message that you don't need sound to show you how my experience is with Cody or how Cody's experience is
 - o Mmhmm
- There were some shots of nature, trees, and skies, and river, what made you want to include them?
 - o Yeah just showcasing the various elements that were in there. There were some moments when the girls went ahead with the dog, and I thought it was important to just set the environment. So then you understand the context in which everyone's interacting. We got these beautiful trees around, this perfect blue sky, there's the clear river
- Ok, yeah, to show the environment. So which park was this?
 - o This was the...it's actually in [Texas town] city limit's. It's in the south...how am I forgetting? It's the big park in the south; it's the state park. McKinney falls, there we go
- So it wasn't too far. The last scene, what did you intend to tell through your last scene? So this was back in your old apartment, your old house. And what did you intend to tell through that shot
 - o I guess a closing. We've taken everything in the car just and just thrown it in the living, sort of showing, hey were back. All our junks everywhere. I think Cody was just chilling out there by the door. I think the scene is kind

- of a closure for the whole story, but also here he is, we had this long adventure, but he's still ready to go out on another adventure all together.
- Ok that's cool. I really got that closure piece. And it's a closure because it's a return to home too. So there was the shooting part and there's the editing part. Can I ask you about your general reflections about those two stages of making that film? What thoughts you had, what considerations you had
 - o Yeah I think we talked a lot about shooting. With the editing, [Vanessa] actually took the lead on that. With the footage in the film there was probably 3 or 4 minutes we didn't put in, because they were redundant or it just didn't turn out very well so you really saw the majority of the footage captured. In terms of what we left out, it was really redundant or not very good quality. And then we decided that we put it all in chronological order, so it's literally like this scene happened before this one and it was sort of mixing of oh well this would maybe go better here, it was all chronological. And then the muting. We decided not to put any transitions just because the way we experienced were the transitions for us, we really wanted it to be snapshot-esque. And then in terms of the first, opening thing "Camping with Cody," keep it plain and simple and show that was very much a family outing. Like the casual colloquial, "Yeah, you know, camping with Cody!!"
 - Right very straightforward
 - o Yeah exactly. And [Vanessa] decided to put a title "our deaf dog" and I was like honey that's not necessary and she just thought it was funny and silly and was like what if someone sees this and they don't know he's deaf so they don't understand that it's muted, because he's deaf
 - So that's what her argument was
 - o Yeah but I was like Aki knows! And so she understood and we both had a good giggle about it. But I think that was all her major considerations when in editing part
 - Was there a part that you enjoyed more, shooting, editing or any part of it
 - o I think the shooting because it's inherently connected to having had to experience the things that was going on and being there. Whereas the editing it was more of a sterile process of sitting and staring at the computer screen. It was fun looking at the footage though. I was like oh yay this was like a couple of weeks ago. It's awesome to just relive it through the footage. So that was a cool aspect. And we also showed it to Cody
 - How did he like it?
 - o He just scratched himself and nuzzled us. Yes the usual, the usual.
 - So what was your intention behind showing it to Cody

- I guess it was like, even though he's not going to process it in the same way we do, and probably didn't even realize what the heck he was watching, I guess it's the idea of he's our son and this is our family, this is one of those family videos we're going to watch. With the grand kids one day, sort of thing.
- Gotcha. Part of the family, so let's have him watch it.
 - Yeah exactly. He's the star after all.
- Yeah he was.
 - And I just have a cameo. Haha.
- Yeah, it was the director's cameo.
 - Hahaha
- With the dog poop right?
 - Yup
- You did talk about the shooting piece. One other question that I had was about your orientation of the video. It was the page orientation? I think that's what it's called...no, portrait! Sorry.
 - Yeah the vertical
- Yeah the vertical. Was that intentional? Was there reasoning behind that?
 - Actually I didn't even...when I first started I was sort of pulling out of my pocket and playing around and then [Vanessa] was like you should probably think about orienting it one way just so when we're putting it together it doesn't feel jolting with the changes so I stuck with the vertical simply because when you pull it out of the pocket it's usually going to be, you know, in that boat, easy to function and I figured Cody's low to the ground, but I also want people to be able to see, if they want to see the scenery that's above him so that vertical might work best with the dog and all the nature
- Ok I gotcha. Did you have any different reactions to that when you were editing and you were noticing that there was a lot of black in between? I'm not sure if I'm asking well – were you happy with the decision as you were editing the film?
 - Yeah honestly I don't think it crossed my mind conspicuously but I felt like she made a good call to sense that there was no weird jolting between, like I think there was a few where maybe it was oriented a bit differently but I think it was a nice change of pace vs. a jolting “oh oh”
- Yeah and I guess I got to keep in mind that I was watching the film on a computer, which is naturally a landscape orientation
 - Right so yeah that makes sense.
- And so this would be a very different experience if you were watching it on your phone
 - Right that's why you were talking about the “black space.”

- Yeah
 - o Ok I get you
- Yeah, that makes sense. Which is giving me thoughts about the actual device with which you
 - o Yeah, I wouldn't have even thought about that. It doesn't just the way you film but also the way you watch it
- Right, sorry I just had a moment
 - o No no no, it didn't pass my mind either
- Let me see...Actually, I think that's about it in terms of things I wanted to ask. The one other thing that we already talked about was, the sequence where you seemed to be preparing for the camping trip and then camping and then coming home. You talked a little bit about the chronological order, but was that intentional that there was preparation, there was the actual thing and there was the resolution of things
 - o Mmhmm I really just wanted to tell the story of heading out and coming home so I made sure to get footage of both. There were some things I wish I'd gotten the footage of like while we're driving trying to capture the movement of when we're in the car and all sorts of things but she had to use the phone for GPS so things like that could have been captured. And maybe having, if it was done again, more footage to have more clear transitions between things but yeah definitely it was a thought that I had before hand. At least we knew that we're going to have some scenes in the house hold just packing things up. Definitely scenes in the camp trip and when we get back home.
- And speaking of things you wish you had done, what were other parts where you felt like you could do differently or regrets about the film
 - o Yeah just generally trying to capture more. Because there was so much that happened on that trip but especially the actual nighttime camping stuff was some of the juiciest parts. We ended up not sleeping at all because it was so cold, the dog was freaking out so there was a lot of like a lot of profound reflections on life and so a lot of emotions going on for us and the dog it would have been really valuable to put in the film. Here we are the three of us put in the cold ass tent with these coyotes and none of us able to sleep and his allergies is going nuts because he was outdoors and not that it's in there because I mentioned the lighting and charging the phone, I think that's the major missing piece
- Yeah with things like, shooting that would've made a more complete film is the sense that I'm getting. But do you think it would've enhanced your experience of the whole thing if you had filmed it?

- Yeah it makes sense because inherently by filming it, you're disrupting it in some way. Because there were moments when there was a lot of emotions, pulling out a phone to film it would have perhaps disrupted that emotion and changed the way the whole conversation was going once the phone was pulled out. So, yeah, I think it might have changed the dynamics, but I think it would've been a happy distraction because we were lying there wide awake, wishing we could sleep and maybe activity in and of itself would have been therapeutic because we had something to do, and it would have been fun. So, I think it would have changed the nature of what had happened but it might have been like a positive activity
- Gotcha. Ok. That's interesting. I mean it is an interesting question whether this whole trip was interrupted or disrupted by the filmmaking, but I'm not getting the sense that that's how you felt as you were filming it
 - Yeah I think for most of all the other scenes, because I wasn't the principal actor I wasn't very immersed, it was very easy to capture since they were three other people to keep the action and activity going, I was able to just go on for the ride, but in the tent there were three of us and we were all essential actors to what was happening, which I think would've changed sort of the way the disruption would've occurred
- Yeah this is all interesting. Thank you so much again. Are there any other pieces that I haven't asked about that you want to speak to about the film, or the act of making the film?
 - I think in terms of the product you ended up getting from me, we touched upon a lot. I guess in terms of like sort of the delay in figuring out what to film might be an interesting thing to explore with you. So I knew I wanted it to be something outdoors and so when the camping trip was finally planned I was like yay that would definitely be an ideal way to do it. But when I got home from winter break, because I went back to [hometown] and I stayed there for like two and a half weeks, which is a very long time and the dog actually came with me, and it was really interesting experience. I think we talked about this the last time we met because we went home with me for thanksgiving, which is only like 3-4 days, but bringing him home for 2.5 weeks, he really integrated with the family. Like he and our dog Annie became best friends. The cats were tolerating him and not bullying him finally. My parents have come up with new pet names for him. He really fell in love with our backyard and porch, which we don't have here for him. It encouraged my family to go out more and take Annie with us because they're all obese and not really outdoorsy people. A lot of my life was spent trying to pass that myself and be healthier and the dog helps me do that. When I got home I looked at Annie

and I was like oh my god girl you gained like 15 pounds. You're not washed or brushed. You're not having fun. If there's ever a dog that's excited about walks, it's her. Cody loves them too but she, it's like they're her life, you know. And she was getting it once every other week, ridiculous little amounts. And so I got home and Cody, I tell my mom and brother, hey grab the leash, get Annie, and let's go on a walk. It was really good for everyone, Cody's presence showed them how unhealthy Annie was in comparison. But also got all of us outdoors and walk more, spend more time in the backyard with them and he brought joy to the family. And for me too, going back home for a lot of different reasons is a really emotional thing in a mostly negative way so having him with me was like I got this companion to go to like if I get into a fight, I can go and just pet him and like remove myself and no one's going to disrupt that time with the dog. Or at night, when I'm feeling lonely and had a hard day, he's here to cuddle with me. It's also an excuse for me to go to my girlfriend and her family because they love the dog, and I thought about trying to film some of that but then I realized I'm too central of an actor here. And if I ended up filming it would have been more of like a, maybe even using my computer, sort of like log entries almost? You know, like day 1: this is what happened. Um because it was a real journey with him. So I thought about filming that, but I don't know exactly how to go about it.

- Yeah in the beginning you kept mentioning the whole participant and observer thing and it sounds like with what happened over thanksgiving?
 - o This is winter break
- Right over winter break you felt more like a participant in what was going on, and that had made you less want to make it into a film, was it more difficult to make it into a film?
 - o Yeah I think so just in terms of logistics, you know. It's hard to get myself and Cody to capture this moment and then of course the emotional side, there was a lot of stuff that's hard to talk about. So I wasn't sure exactly how to capture it logistically or like stylistically. But I thought about man this is really about my relationship with Cody and even how it's integrated into my family versus I think the film that you ended up getting was a lot more about [Vanessa] and Cody and the way that I see that relationship and respect and of course a little bit about how I'm in there. So I think it ended up with a very different film.
- Yeah that's getting me to think about other questions. So I'm trying to see what the obstacles would be for making it more about you and Cody. What do you think the obstacle was?

- Yeah I think a part of it was thinking about things I could capture while I was the one holding the phone. And before I was like you know I can capture him hanging out in the porch or my brother and my mom with me walking the dogs. I could maybe selfie-capture us cuddling. Things like that. It was more of the self-reflective part that I wasn't sure how I would capture exactly and then the part of do I want to speak to the camera and vocalize my feelings of what's happening or do I want to tell that through film or if I want to vocalize some of it. You know I have to wait until some people are not at home because they might find what I'm saying a little difficult, perhaps, right? So I think those are some of the...and I think there were questions where I don't think I would ever stood steady in silence long enough and think through it to come up with a solution so I kept going everyday with the same questions and I never took time to properly answer them to move forward with a concrete plan to capture the experience.
- Yeah and all of this might have not gone through stages and stages of thinking through this. I think what I'm noticing through this is, kind of going through the whole poetry comparison, with poetry there's you writing it, I bet with filming, there's someone using the camera and filming there's also that person who is being, or the people or environment that's being filmed, and something about that changes things.
 - And it's hard to be both at the same time in a way that really captures effectively what's happening I think.
- And it sounds like if you wanted it to make a film about Cody, I wonder if you felt the need to be in that film too. Is that something you were thinking about
- Yeah I think so, but then again, I would've done it similarly with how I did the camping trip and just sort of like from my perspective this is what I'm seeing and this is what's going on. But alas I was never critically reflective enough to figure it out in time
 - Yeah and perhaps that's what it means for us to film. Like to make films, it's not about going through months and months of planning and shooting things. For you it was about the camping trip and just shooting things and that's what filming was, and filming meant to a certain sense. And that's the sense that I'm getting
- For sure for sure I think I didn't want it to feel staged and uncomfortable. I just wanted it to feel very natural and organic and I think that's what I struggled with. How do I make it feel that way when I'm filming it but I want to be in it at the same time and there are these other people who don't want to be in it and like all sorts of things
 - Yeah. Thank you so much.

- Yeah of course
 - Yeah I really enjoyed our interview and conversation. Was there anything else? I also don't want to cut us short if you had anything about filmmaking or about Cody or nature in general
- Yeah I can't think of anything right now. But in the process if you have follow up questions, or if any bit's that I have, you will definitely get an email from me
 - Awesome, ok. That sounds good to me, sounds like a good plan.