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The Current and the String

Kristin C. Callahan

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The Current and the String

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As a newborn lays in her cradle eyes wide to the world she experiences all that occurs and exists around her. She cries. Her mother rushes to comfort her in her arms. She learns. Attentively absorbing all that she has never before felt, seen, heard or smelt. Second by second she catalogs this new world into the emptiness of her mind. The learning process has begun and will continue on for the rest of her life. Her mind, body and spirit will be forever advancing; growing in experience and knowledge to form a whole person that is a sum of all that has come before.

For most, the basis for one's initial knowledge is derived from one's parents. Being the first example on how to be human, they instill in us their moral and social values and try to communicate how to be a whole person. This relationship creates our view on how the world works and how to function as a human being with in it. It also can influence the structure and course of all relationships that follow it. By examining and understanding these initial relationships we will be better prepared to face challenges in future ones. This piece is my examination of this initial relationship. Through my exploration of these ideas I have been able to understand more about myself, my father and my interactions with others.

The goal of this thesis project was to immerse the viewer into an environment that encouraged them to examine the nature of their relationships with others and understand the dependence of those relationships on their initial parental relationships. Upon this examination I hoped that the viewer will have a better insight into themselves and their interactions with others. I felt that understanding this primary relationship is essential to understanding each that follows it.
To represent these concepts I developed a narrative installation that was based off of my perception of significant moments in my relationship with my father. The story was to center around a father and daughter and show the evolution of their relationship through a series of moments that illustrated its progression from childhood to adulthood. The retelling of these personal moments and how they influence each other was to be the central focus of the piece.

Once production started, I began to feel this representation might not communicate my ideas effectively to the viewer. On holding rehearsals and seeing my personal memories acted out I came to realize that this representation did not allow the viewer to become personally involved with the piece. The goal of the piece was to invoke the viewer's examination of personal relationships and develop an understand of the dependence of those relationships on each other, especially that of the initial parental relationship. This representation merely retold my personal experiences and hoped that someone might make a personal connection to it.

To remedy these issues I determined that I needed to represent my ideas more universally and develop interactivity between the viewer and the installation. To represent a parental/child relationship more universally I decided to focus on the specific emotional states that summarized each stage of the relationship. Childhood would be characterized as joyful and carefree, adolescence would be turbulent and detached and adulthood would be a return to happiness along with friendship and understanding. In each of these stages the father and daughter characters would react differently toward each other to display these characteristics and show the development of the relationship. This would be a silent interaction that will rely on body language to communicate how
the characters feel towards each other. I felt that simplifying the relationship by representing only its emotional essence would help the viewer to more easily identify with the piece. The emotions depicted would evoke memories of their own lives thus, allowing them to make a personal connection. In addition to creating a more universal piece, I wanted to make it more interactive. To accomplish this, I developed the idea of physically connecting the viewers to each other to emphasize the idea of dependence. I felt that this would help the viewer to see the dependence of their current relationships on their initial parent/child relationship and how past events influence future ones.

Upon reworking my idea, I began to think on how to visually represent my new concepts. Instead of retelling my past memories I wanted to convey, through video representation, the essence of each stage of the father/daughter relationship. This would be accomplished through a silent interaction between the two characters. Compared to my original idea, which was scripted, this was greatly simplified and was more dependent on the unspoken chemistry between the two actors. Due to this, I decided to use my father, my young cousin and myself as actors. I felt that it would be easier for us to convey the father/daughter bond since we could draw from past shared experience.

Since I was using my family as actors, I had to return home to the southwest suburbs of Chicago to shoot the footage. To allow me access to both my father and cousin I planned to complete my shooting during the Thanksgiving holiday. My mother and brother would also assist in the shooting and act as camera people. They would operate my personal hand held DV camera and the Sony PD170 borrowed from RIT.

Before the trip I developed a few different scenarios that expressed my ideas of what characterized each stage of the father/daughter relationship. I based these around
the different locals around Chicago where I remembered experiencing similar feelings. Childhood was to be characterized by feelings of love, happiness, safety, admiration, protection, adventure, and discovery. I planned three scenarios for this stage. The first was based around the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry. Here the father and daughter would explore the educational activities in the museum. The father would lovingly foster the child's intellectual growth as they played and learned together. The second was to be centered around picking out and cutting down a Christmas tree. This would show the father and daughter working together as a team to accomplish their task. Finally, the third would show the interaction of two as the father pushed the daughter on the swings. This would express the joy of both the father and daughter as they played together. To represent adolescence I developed two scenarios that were characterized by distance, ambivalence, annoyance, and confusion. The first would take place in the kitchen of my parent's home during a meal. It would involve an awkward, mostly one-sided conversation between the two. The father would try his hardest to engage his daughter in conversation as she answers in snotty one-worded responses. The second scenario would take place at a local green house during a holiday flower show. The daughter would try her best to express her hatred toward the place and her father for making her come. The father on the other hand is confused and hurt because of the way that the daughter is acting. Lastly, I developed one representation of the adult stage that depicted a loving friendship based on a mutual understanding between two friends. This would be set in a forest preserve and show the two as they enjoyed nature and each other's company.
My goal in shooting these scenarios was to capture the natural interaction of the two characters throughout the various stages. I wanted to recreate events that had happened in my life and use video to document them just as they may have been when they originally occurred. I felt by using real past events I could more successfully recreate this natural interaction since both my father and I had these references to base our performance. Ultimately, I wanted to create footage that emulated the family interaction of a home video with a more refined sense of composition and camera work. To accomplish this I planned to direct the actors, my father, cousin and myself, only in their roles as father and daughter. I wanted them to understand the emotional state they were in in each stage and how they felt towards the other person. I wanted them to interact and react to each other naturally within the scene; while the camera person then reacted to them while keeping in mind the objectives of the scene.

Upon arriving home, I discussed my plans for shooting with my family and explained to each member their roles. Everyone's schedules were coordinated and a shooting schedule was planned out. It was decided that two days would be needed to shoot the childhood scenes because both the museum and Christmas tree hunting required a full day's commitment. Both adolescence and adulthood could be shot in one day since I planned to use the same location for the greenhouse scene and the forest preserve scene.

The first day of shooting began in search of the perfect Christmas tree. Being a yearly family tradition it wasn't difficult to recall feelings of the annual event. On the hour long trip to the tree farm we reminisced about past trips to give my father and my cousin, Nicole, experiences to draw their performance from. My cousin has been on this
trip many times herself so she had a good idea on how things might have been between my father and me. Her challenge was to act as if my father was hers. Being a shy child this truly was a challenge. My father too had to see Nicole as his daughter. I directed him to remember how he would act with me as a child and try to act that same way with Nicole. I wanted them to step into their roles and play out the event as naturally as possible. My brother and I ran the cameras and did our best to capture the natural interaction between the two.

Overall, this day of shooting produced mediocre results. The interaction between Nicole and my father seemed a little forced. It seemed as if Nicole was having a hard time dealing with being on camera and interacting with my father. She appeared very nervous and uncomfortable. This also resulted in my father over playing his role to counteract Nicole’s nervousness. His actions seemed forced and unnatural. The camera work was lacking in quality too. Due to the uneven ground at the tree farm, it was difficult to track the actors without disrupting the shot. The best footage of the day were static shots of actions such as carrying the tree to the car and sawing down the tree all of which did not capture the essence that I wanted to portray.

The next day of shooting at the museum produced better results. Both Nicole and my father seemed more comfortable. They interacted very convincingly as father and daughter. They learned and played together as they made their way through the museum’s exhibits. I was able to capture a lot of footage but was uncertain how I would edit it down to create a complete picture of childhood. After the museum, we shot the two of them playing together on the swings at a local park. I felt that this turned out the best of the three situations. It captured perfectly the mood I wanted to express in the simplest form.
Having finished the childhood segments with my father and Nicole it was time to move on to adolescence and adulthood. These two sections required me to come out from behind the camera and become an actress. This created challenges. Being unable to control the camera I was unsure if the scene would be captured to my standards. I had to place my trust in my mother, the camera person for this shoot. Together we developed a system of working that allowed my mother to easily capture the action and allowed me control over the movement and composition of each shot. Before each shot, I would define a composition and show it to my mother to have her mimic it. I defined landmarks for the composition and instructed her on what to focus on or follow. This worked very well. Since I was mostly the focus of shots, I had a certain level of control over what my mother captured. I was very happy with the outcome of the footage shot this day. It came out beautifully and I was very proud of my mother's camera work.

Directing my father in these segments could have also been a challenge, but luckily they were effortless because of the personal connection to the subject matter my father and I shared. Having the depictions of these periods based off of my own experiences allowed us to more accurately depict those time periods by recalling past events and feelings. To direct my father, I first communicated to him the feelings I wanted to convey in the scenes and gave him a general idea on how his character would feel and act. Secondly, we would talk about similar past experiences to get us into character. Lastly, I would define loose guidelines for his movement in the scene and his interaction with my character. Once we began to shoot, I was able to continue to direct my father's performance though my own acting. The bond between my father and I
allowed me to lead the scene and have him follow, thus allowing my further control over the scene.

This family collaboration worked seamlessly and produced spectacular results. We captured two adolescence and one adult scenarios this day. The first adolescence scenario was a reenactment of an awkward family dinner which was shot in the family kitchen. My father and I replayed one of many unfortunate dinners past that consisted of dirty looks, hastily eaten meals, confusion, frustration and hurt feelings. I was happy with its outcome but felt the scene was too dependent on the spontaneous dialog between the two characters. I wanted to describe the relationship in these three stages through the body language, facial expression and proximity of the two characters with in the shot. This was in order to represent a base of universal emotions that everyone could apply their own experiences on top of. I felt that this scene became too specific in its dialog and strayed from my vision. The second adolescence scenario was shot in the local conservatory during the annual Christmas poinsettia display. It embodied every family fun event that turned sour because of my negative attitude. Lastly, we shot the adult segment. It was set in the forest preserve behind the conservatory and showed father and daughter enjoying the company of each other as they strolled through the woods. I was happy with the results of this day and felt that the adolescence scene in the conservatory and the adult scene in the woods would work well with the childhood scene on the swings. These three scenes complemented each other well with their natural settings while illustrating my concept with contrasting performances

The talents and assistance of my family allowed me to successfully capture all of the footage for my piece during the Thanksgiving holiday. Once I returned to Rochester
I began to edit my footage to more cleanly convey my concept. Beginning with childhood, I wanted to focus on a closeness between the two characters that seemed to loosen as the segment progressed. This was to show the change in the relationship as the daughter grew older and more independent and allude to the distance that would be created by adolescence. This effect was accomplished by beginning with shots that showed the father winding the daughter up in the swing. This was meant to represent the protective cradling of a child in its parent's arms. The sequence would then be spliced with shots of the father pushing his daughter higher and higher on the swing showing the father's conflict to keep his daughter close while also encouraging her grow and become independent. The winding image would then be replaced with footage of the father and daughter swinging together on their own swings. This further loosened the closeness between the two, but continued to illustrate the support of the father. The sequence ends with the daughter jumping off of the swing and walking away from her father to transition into adolescence.

While editing the adolescence sequence I wanted to focus on the tension in the relationship and the pulling away of the daughter from the father. The footage shot for this sequence showed the father and daughter moving through various rooms viewing the plants in the conservatory. Edited together I wanted this to give the feeling that the daughter was running away from the father. The first shot shows the distance between the two characters as they roam around the first room looking at the bright red poinsettias. The daughter in the foreground occasionally looks back in contempt at her father as he looks down at the flowers. He too occasionally looks back to her; confused and concerned. The camera follows the girl as she roams into another room. Her father
follows. She quickly passes through the aisle of poinsettias into a room of brown desert plants. The daughter quickly looks over the plants and exits the room, leaving the father alone. This is the final separation of the father and daughter as she enters adulthood. It is this separation that allows the two characters to reconnect as adults in the future.

Editing of the final sequence, adulthood, showed a reconnection of the two characters as friends. The scene begins with the two walking down a path. They talk and begin to joke around, the daughter takes her father's arm as they continue down the path. They then sit down and relax for a moment and continue on into the woods. Reemerging from the woods arm in arm, they walk past the camera. Here I am using the woods is a symbol of hardships that the two have faced and will face in the future. Having the characters reemerge from these woods shows that they are able to overcome hardships and will make their relationship stronger through the process.

Upon completing my edit, I began to experiment with different ways of manipulating the footage to show the emotional state of the relationship and the passage of time as the video cycled. This stage of creation also required the development of time effective techniques to produce animation.

I began by experimenting with my initial idea of using graffiti like images and animation to represent the emotional state of the characters. Using a Wacom tablet and Photoshop I experimented with a few different styles. A few test animations were created that played with adding graphic elements such as text and symbols, rotoscoping the characters with different expressive line quality, altering the imagery using distortion filters, and changing the characters by drawing added details over the video. Of these, the drawn lines over the video were the most aesthetically pleasing, but I felt the randomness
of imagery would not help unify the three sequences. There needed to be one image or symbol that spanned the three stages and could be altered to express the emotions of that stage.

Contemplating this problem, I began to think of the idea of a bond and how I might visualize the connection between the characters. I decided to use the imagery of a rope. This, I felt could be the perfect metaphor for the changing states of this relationship. It could be seen as an umbilical cord during childhood that provides love and protection, a controlling leash in adolescence, or a connection in adulthood. This would put emphasis on the physical distance between the characters and act as a visual manifestation of the characters' emotions.

As the stages progress, the depiction of the rope would change to reflect the stages' moods. My vision for the rope during childhood would originate from the father and wrap gently around the daughter. It would be a soft and light aura that wrapped around her waste. It would follow her, protecting her, but never controlling her. During adolescence it would be drastically different appearing very cold and solid. It would simulate the movement of a whip, attach tightly to the daughter's waste and grow like slithering snakes to encompass her torso. The father will hold the other end in his hand as he would a leash, fighting to maintain control of his daughter. She in turn, will struggle and pull against the rope. Ultimately she will break the connection and free herself. During adulthood this connection will be mutually reformed. Each character will hold their own rope. They will occasionally wrap it around the other person to simulate their need for that person's love and support.
To produce the animation of the rope efficiently, I experimented with different traditional and computerized techniques. I began by printing out key frames of the video and drawing the rope animation over them. I found this to be a very slow process since all the drawings needed to be scanned into the computer, cleaned up in Photoshop, and compiled into the footage. Because the final edited footage came to a little over twelve minutes, I felt that producing the animation in this way would take too long. Producing all of the animation in the computer using a Wacom tablet would speed up the process and allow instant feedback of the motion while I animated. I first experimented using Photoshop, since it gave me a lot of options for creation and control over my images. I created image sequences of the video, brought each frame into Photoshop and drew the rope over those on new layers. This process proved to be awkward and required a lot of time to manually load and save individual frames.

Still hoping to utilize the strengths of Photoshop, I attempted to use filmstrip files that I rendered from After Effects. These types of files produce a single tiled image of all of the frames in a movie sequence and allows one to work as they would to paint or scratch on film. Once in Photoshop one could then draw on or alter the image. Importing it back into After Effects allowed the footage to play normally. This technique was also difficult to work in because of the large file sizes that slowed down the computer and sometimes crashed Photoshop. Also, it did not allow for onionskining of the frames of animation. This would make it difficult to produce smooth motion.

Determining that Photoshop would not assist me in the creation of my animation; I decided to experiment with time based programs such as Flash and After Effects. I had done a rotoscoping project in Flash before and liked the work flow, but did not like the
limitations of the drawing tools, such as changing brush properties. Being unable to produce the effects I wanted with this program I began to explore After Effects and discovered the vector paint tool. This tool had control over line quality like Photoshop and a similar work flow to Flash. It was perfect. I was able to draw right over the video frame by frame, control the smoothness, color and position of the lines afterwards and onionskin the frames for ease of animation.

To produce this animation, I began by looking at the motion of the characters in the footage. I planned out the animation of the rope to logically fit their movement. I also devised ways of altering their motion with cutout pieces to aide in the believability of the motion of the rope. For example, to create a whip-like motion I created a duplicate of the father's arm and animated it as if it were a cutout puppet so it could drive the movement of the rope.

Once I was finally done with the animation of the rope, I focused on altering the footage as it repeated. During the installation, each stage of the relationship will play once totally unaltered, it will then repeat with the animation of the rope over top of it, and then continue to repeat with the degradation of the background imagery. This degradation of the background is meant to show the passage of time and draw more focus onto the characters and emphasize the closeness or distance between the two. To isolate the characters I used two layers of the same footage, drew a mask frame by frame around the characters with the vector paint tool, and altered the background image. The degradation of the background began with the desaturation of color, then the break down of the image into contour lines and then finally the blurring of image into a cloud of white.
The process of drawing the rope and the mask to isolate characters was a very long and tedious task. Working with around twelve minutes of footage and drawing at fifteen frames per second made this process almost unbearable. To complete the entire piece took about 18 weeks of eight hour days.

To complement the imagery of the video, which described growing up from the daughter's perspective, I wanted to create a poem that expressed the father's thoughts on watching his little girl grow up. Having never formally written a poem I began to research the structure and technical aspects of different types. I read many different types of poems but was ultimately influenced by the informal narrative nature of independent hip hop and spoken word poetry. I concluded that I wanted to focus on the message of my poem and use poetic devices such as alliteration, rhyme and rhythm to emphasize certain aspects of the story. Metaphorically, I wanted to describe this process of growth and separation through the story of a boy and his kite. I felt that this imagery worked well to complement the animation of the rope and further emphasize the bond between the character and their dependence on one another. The story chronicled the boy's creation of his kite, its loss and then joyous return. These events reflected the stages of the father/daughter relationship and were constructed to correspond with the timing of the video.

Having all of the elements of the installation ready I prepared for its construction. I gathered my materials and drew out a layout of the space. My goal was to create a space that encompassed the viewer and promoted movement throughout the space. This was accomplished through a triangular design. The three screens, which each held one of the relationship stages, were on one wall in a slightly arced orientation. The other two walls
angled inward and left room enough to enter the space. These walls were covered in pictures of my father and I in the different stages in our relationship. This provided stimulus that would encourage the movement of the viewer through the space. The floor would be covered in black plastic with randomly dropped white kite string to further illustrate the impact that others, such as our parents, have on our lives. The viewer would leave their mark on the installation by displacing the positions of these strings. Interaction would also occur between the viewers. As they enter the installation they would grab a belt and a length of rope and attach themselves to someone else in the installation. This causes a dependence on the other individuals in the space and further illustrated my concepts.

The installation was to be housed in the empty space that had once held the large printing press for the school of printing. Once regular classes were over for the quarter, I was free to take over the space. Construction began the weekend before final screenings with the help of Erick Rohn and Stephanie Benvenuto. Erick designed, built and hung the screens. These consisted of three wooden frames that held gray rear projection screen material and were hung by metal cables from the catwalk above. Stephanie assisted me in hanging fishing line from the ceiling to create a web in which to hang the pictures of my father and myself. Once the screens and picture walls were constructed, Erick and I cut out black plastic in the shape of triangles to cover the floor. This visually brought the whole space together. Erick and I tied the ropes together and laid out the belts. We then set up the three projectors, speakers and lights; loaded the DVDs and CD; printed out programs; set up the reception; and waited for everyone to arrive.
One by one, people began to arrive. I lead them to the pile of belts and ropes and instructed them on how to put them on and attach themselves together. They created a great giggling line that wiggled its way towards the space. They pulled each other along and suddenly came to a halt as the video started. They stood and watched the entirety of the video. Heads first turned to the left to see the images of childhood, then towards the middle to view adolescence and then right to see adulthood. As the video began to loop they began to scan between the screens to see the alteration of the video. The video ended and they moved together through the rest of the space to view the pictures on the walls.

This was an interesting experiment in human behavior. I was surprised that being tied together was generally accepted by the crowd. There were only a few individuals that didn't feel comfortable enough to participate. I suspected more people to feel uncomfortable in this situation since I was asking them to closely attach themselves to others to be lead by them. It was also surprising that everyone was willing to let the person in front of them lead their movement. I expected more people to try to exert control over the movement of the group.

The opening reception went very well. Overall I received many positive comments from everyone who attended. Of these I was most concerned with the reactions of my family, especially my father. They seemed to be very proud of my work and my father was honored to have inspired it.

The experience as a whole was very challenging but well worth the effort. It had taken me a while to develop my ideas and find ways of realizing them, but I felt that in the end I produced something that had meaning for both myself and others that viewed it.
My goal in creating this installation was to inspire people to look at their relationships and understand the dependence of those relationships on their initial parental relationships. Through this examination I hope they would have a better insight into themselves, their actions and their interactions with others. For myself, this was an integral time for me to examine these concepts. It has allowed me to understand more about myself, my father, our relationship, and my relationship with others. The experience of creating this piece has helped me to resolve past issues with my father, made me more aware of my actions and has allowed me to become a happier person. Hopefully this piece has and will inspire others to find the same contentedness within themselves and their relationships.

Reflections:

This piece was a personal and artistic journey. It has allowed me to explore myself as a daughter, as well as an artist. It has made me more insightful into my behavior and their origins stemming from my parental relationships. It has also driven me to create a piece which would express my ideas to others in a way that would inspire personal examination. Overall, the challenge of creation was a rewarding experience.

Being an important and influential aspect of my life, my family and friends are a great inspiration of work. This piece was an exploration of my relationship with my father. I am very similar to my father in many ways and this caused a lot of problems during my adolescence. This time period drove us apart and caused a lot pain on both sides. As an adult, I felt I needed to reflect on this to understand and resolve problems in our relationship. This analysis has allowed me to resolve past issues and understand the universality of the problems my father and I faced.
In addition to personal growth this process has helped me to understand myself as an artist. It has given me a sense of identity as an artist by helping me to further define my style. It has also allowed me to confront my faults in my production style. Producing this piece has shown me the value of planning. In the past it has been difficult for me to see the value since I liked freedom and spontaneity of a loosely planned piece. The beginning of my production began this way, but as time whittled away planning helped me to focus and finish my piece on time. In addition to this, working in conjunction with my thesis adviser, Malcom Spaull, has helped me to appreciate the benefit of outside opinion and break from my self reliant attitude. He offered a different perspective that helped create a more successful piece.

Overall, I felt the piece was successful, but there are a few areas that could have been improved or explored further. The biggest thing I would like to improve would be the presentation of the installation. The environment it was constructed in was too large and open. Ideally, I would like to portray a more intimate environment. There also needs to be more interaction between the viewer and the installation. I felt that viewers needed to traverse more within the space to empathize the idea of dependence illustrated by the rope connections. This might be done by creating different areas of interest that will drive the viewers to move. Improvements that I would make to the video would be to create more variation in shot type. I feel this would add more interest and create a better flow throughout the piece. Finally, I would like to spend more time animating the breakdown of the background. Resolving these issues will to improve my piece and more clearly express my concepts.
Appendix A

Thesis Proposal
This piece will be an examination of memory and how it is altered by mood and circumstance. I feel that past memories are remembered differently based on an individual’s feelings towards the people or situations involved. I also believe that these feelings may cause us to construct false memories that alter our original depiction of an event.

When experiencing an event, all the sensory information associated with it is captured by the brain in order to allow us to assess the situation and interact within it. Once processed, some of this information becomes useless and is dropped from memory. Already, this creates an altered form of the original event. As time passes, more and more of this information is dropped, leaving only its essence. Irrelevant details have now been deleted and all that remains is a sensory summary of the event.

I feel that in this state memory is very vulnerable. When we consciously recall an event we try to construct a cohesive story from the Swiss cheese that has become out memory. We unconsciously fill in the holes that have been erased over time. It is because of this, that memory can be easily altered by an individual. In trying to reconstruct an event in one’s mind all current outside influences can become added to the original event. Take for example, trying to recall a fond memory of skiing after breaking a leg doing the very same activity. The more recent experience is now linked with the earlier one, forever altering the feelings depicted in the original.

To illustrate my ideas about memory, I plan to analyze my relationship with my father. I will be looking at three stages of this relationship, childhood, adolescences, and adulthood. As a child, my father and I were the best of friends. We did everything together and could not have gotten along better. He was there to teach, support, and just enjoy life with me. But as I grew into my teenage years things began to sour. I began wanting to spend more time away from home with my friends and my father could not understand why. He was not able to accept that I was growing up. This caused a number of problems between us. I felt that he was being too needy and controlling so, I began to detest him and rebel. This caused a lot of arguments. It was not until college that things started to neutralize between us. The fights became less frequent and we began to interact on more of an adult level. This allowed our relationship to evolve into a friendship.
In each of these three stages of our relationship I experience and remember things differently. As a child my dad was associated with positive feelings. Every new experience reinforced the picture I had of my father and the things that we experienced together. Each memory I retained was not significantly altered by mood or current situation. As a teenager this was not the case. The way I felt about my father had change. I now associated him with negative feelings. This caused me to remember events from childhood differently or totally forget some of them all together. For example, I may change the meaning of a memory by excluding details, placing more importance on irrelevant information, or manufacturing false facts. This was done to further convince myself that my father was an ogre put on this earth to torture poor innocent me. I was just deluding myself. It was not until I became an adult that I realized the problems in our relationship were cause by both my father and I. With this realization, I was able to reconstruct my memories of childhood and adolescence by taking in account all of my new experiences and revelations. This process too created false concepts of the original events. Though this is a more enlightened recollection of memory, it is still false. These revelations have caused me to create idealized images of my childhood and exaggerated depictions of adolescence. Through the exploration of these stages one can examine the deteriorative process involved in the recollection of memory.

I will illustrate these concepts within the context of an installation. It will consist of a constructed room containing six monitors and a projection screen for the ceiling. The room will represent the confines of the mind with the monitors being the cells in which memories are stored. The projection screen will allude to an out of mind space and will represent current reality. The viewer will enter the room and experience the mind space while being able to observe reality through the projection on the ceiling.

Video and animation will be used to depict the evolution of my relationship with my father and the deteriorative process of memory. The installation will be divided into three stages, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Each of these stages will be depicted through a series of memories my father and I had shared. First, each of these will be displayed as unaltered video on the projection screen. The first run of the memory will be seen as happening for the first time. After it has ended on screen, it will begin to play on one of the monitors in the room. Here it will be altered. The video will now be rotoscoped and all irrelevant visual details will be dropped out. The next memory will
begin to play on the screen just as the first. The imagery on the monitors will now be affected by the content of the video displayed on the projection screen. This will be done in response to the emotions felt during event and will be represented visually through line, color, and texture.

The structure of the installation is as follows:

1. One memory is played on the projection screen in its pure form.
2. Once it has ended, it will play on one of the monitors in the room. It is now rotoscoped and free of irrelevant details. It will continue to loop for the duration of the installation.
3. Another memory is played on the projection screen in its pure form.
4. Imagery on the monitors in the room is affected by the video playing on the projection screen. This will be done using color, line, and texture.
5. Each memory will play only once on the projection screen and then find a place on one of the monitors in the room (even if this means taking the place of a previous memory.)

Though out the course of this installation the viewer will experience a shift from the naïve calm emotions of childhood, to the turbulence of adolescence, and will then return to the calm yet enlightened emotions of adulthood. The viewer gets a sense of these emotions from the color of the light emitted from the monitors, which bathes the room, from the movement and quality of line that contours the figure, and from the sequence of events displayed. It is the viewer’s subconscious reaction to these things, which will allow them to step inside my head and experience the emotions I felt through out this relationship. It will also allow them to experience the impact that mood and current situation has on memory.

The conceptualization of this piece has helped me to better understand my relationship with my father and has helped to resolve past conflicts between us. I hope this piece will inspire those who experience it to analyze their own relationships and realize the distractive force we can inflict on our own memories.
Appendix B
Shot List
**Childhood**

1. The Museum of Science and Industry
   - shots of father and daughter interacting with the exhibits together
2. Christmas Tree Farm
   - searching for a Christmas Tree
   - cutting down the tree
   - carrying the tree to the car
3. Swings at the Park
   - father twisting the daughter in the swing
   - father pushing the daughter in the swings
   - father and daughter swinging together on their own swing
   - daughter jumping off the swing

**Adolescence**

1. Family Dinner
   - medium shot of the daughter
   - medium shot of the father
   - wide shot of father and daughter eating at the table
2. Conservatory During Christmas
   - wide shot of father and daughter looking at the flowers
   - father and daughter walking down different aisles of flowers
   - wide shot of father and daughter in the desert room

**Adulthood**

1. Walking Through a Forest Preserve
   - front shot of father and daughter walking
   - back shot of father and daughter walking
   - wide shot of father and daughter sitting on a bench
   - medium shot of father and daughter sitting on a bench
   - medium shot of father and daughter walking into the woods
   - wide shot to a medium shot of father and daughter walking out of the woods
Appendix D
The Current and the String (poem)
The Current and the String

The wind softly nudges the clouds
across a sky of brilliant blue
As fingers draw strings over and through

On dew soaked grass
A boy sits
Engrossed on his task

Two ends become one
As he slips them over and through
To join together the knot
on the tail of the kite

Gentle breezes ruffle the delicate paper
Made of aqua marine tissue
held together by timber and tape

Oh, How he wishes to never miss you
as you begin your flight
High upon your celestial path

You will seem so defenseless
Held together only by timber and tape
Amongst the violent air currents
Which will surely fight to hold you in their grip

They might keep you
Far away from the boy on dewy grass
But would this last

To be so far away
In a world you seem to enjoy
In which you fit perfectly

But how could you bear to leave the grass and the dew and the boy far far below

But these are fears
That seem to disappear
As the wind tickles lightly at the boy’s ear

Looking down He sees her wiggle in anticipation
Her form twitching
As she, too, feels the call of the wind
He readies himself
Takes the string in hand
And Holds her tightly

Turning he is off
He releases
And feels her begin to lift

He drives faster and faster
Slowing he turns to look as his soaring beauty
But no
she is thrown down
slammed into the ground

by the very gust that had lifted her.

Sprinting to her aid
The boy falls to the ground on his knees
And examines

Looking up and down he sees no flaw
He lifts it
Looks above and below
Again nothing at all

She is intact
No worse off from her fall
Rising he to rethinks his fears

Looking out into the distant sky he sees the gentle movement of the clouds
Being slowly pushed east by the delicate current
The breeze tickles his ear

He hesitates
Griping the string once more
he begins
a quick walk, a jog, and then into a run

She rises behind him
Pulling at the string to go higher
Higher and higher

He stops and sees her hovering above the trees
Held between the two worlds by the current and the string
Adolescence

Above his head she hovers
Nervously taming the air stream
Up and down and in and out
Trying not to plummet to the ground
She is splendid
Dancing high in the sky
In the world of the bee and the butterfly

Her chest majestically filled
Delicate tail trailing close behind
holding her high up upon the balance beam

A strong gust shoves the boy from behind
Small hands fumble to grasp the string tight
To hold her in flight

But she holds her place
Unaffected by the winds taunts
She rides atop it
Effortlessly gliding along its stream

Together they navigate the current
Dipping in and out and around
Twirling high and diving down
Flirting dangerously with the ground

The clouds in the distance begin to race by
As the sky darkens in hue
The boy’s hair fights to follow them
Grabbing it tightly he places it behind his ear

She begins to rise up
playfully following the whirlwind
She tugs more violently now at the string
To go higher!
Higher!

Feeling fifty feet below
Small and unnoticed
The boy struggles to maintain control
The wind forever pushing him
Pulling her away

He winds the string
She fights
Pulling it tight
to unravel it once more

He holds firm as she struggles
Fighting to stay amongst the racing clouds and gusting winds
To float high above
far away from what is below
This is where she belongs
The ground and boy have nothing for her
They hold and pull and keep her from the distant sky
Where she wishes to fly

She sees the distant swirling clouds
Riding free on the current
Unburdened by the ground

It is there where she needs to be
Amid the twisting twirling winds
Soaring free

The wind insistently pushes on the boy's back
As he tries to maintain ground
Winding each time she pulls away

But each time she pulls a bit stronger
Aided by the muscle of the wind
Coaxing her on to fly higher and higher

Why does she struggle against him
Where is there to go
He sees no need to soar high amid the turbulent clouds
The gusting winds and skies unexplored

With all its breath the strong wind gusts once more.
Stealing the string from the boys hand
And freeing the bound bird

Elated she bursts upward
Following the lead of the gust
Trusting it will carry her high and away
From the ground and the dew and the boy.
Never to be bound again to the ground.

The wind lets up
She slows
The string rests its tip lightly on the ground
Slowly it bobs

The boy lounges for it
Another gust hits him from behind
Spinning him around

He stumbles as he regains the chase
But the wind toys with him.
To keep her just out of reach

The current pulls her higher
Dragging the string high above his head
Out of touch
out of reach

Stopping he watches her rise
Twirling with the soft white clouds
Navigating the turbulent current on her own

How he wishes to hold her
To be a part of her course
Guiding her through the air
With the slightest force

But she needs him no more
To help her grace the skies
She flies superbly all alone.

Climbing higher and higher
She revels in the feeling of freedom
Soaring on her own
Away from strings and knots and hands that hold
Dancing in the clouds
Swirling in the winds
Fling high above
With no worries at all

She continues to rise
Above the clouds
Far away from the sight of the ground

She feels the chill of the air
And the strength of the wind as it nudges her aside
She dips down and around clouds

The winds pushes harder now
Pulling her up and dropping her down
Losing control she follows its course
Afraid of which direction she'll be thrown

She falls
Towards the ground
Away from the clouds and the current

She has lost her freedom to the wind
And will fly no more
Stranded
Bound motionlessly to the ground

His stomach drops while viewing this display
He runs to try and catch her
To hold her up
To keep her from the hard ground

He runs through brambles and bushes
Pushes his way between branches and thorns
And collapses to the ground to break her fall

Laying there with her on his chest
He thinks on way she had to fly to be so free
Way she could not be content with just in between

He would hold her between the two worlds
Sheltering her from the hard ground and the turbulent winds
But is this what she wanted
What she needed

To be tied to the ground
as the rest of the sky lay just beyond reach
to never explore the unknown
rise from success and fall from defeat

Could she be content without knowing
Unable to see what was just beyond reach
And hating him for holding her in between

He rose from the ground
And began to run
He let her go
And she shot to the sky

He held her close
Let the string unwind
And allowed her to flow with the current

She sailed freely in the air
Being gently guided by the boy and the breeze
Contented to live in both
Connected to the two worlds by the love of the boy the string and the freedom of the wind
The Current and the String
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MFA Thesis