Penning the Sociological Imagination
Writing about My Struggles with Writing

Thanh D. Pham

University of Massachusetts Boston

————————————————————

thanh.pham002@umb.edu

Abstract: I have never liked writing. Writing in general is extremely difficult for me. Throughout high-school and on to college every single paper was the bane of my existence. Every time I heard the word 'essay,' I knew it was going to be a dreadful experience. I still remember every single essay that I wrote during high school. Every single one took hours of painful writing and typing. For me the most difficult part of writing was the thinking process. My thoughts were often disorganized to begin with. Writing and typing ideas down were excruciatingly slow. It was a struggle for me from beginning to end. Since beginning college my writing has become more of a problem. It takes me more time to write an essay and it can still be incredibly frustrating. I often find myself distracted from the writing/thinking process, which makes it increasingly difficult and frustrating. Writing this paper while trying to use my sociological imagination, I come to realize that this problem is not one that just affects me. Perhaps my difficulties with writing could be resulting from how I was socialized. Looking at it from this point of view it is possible that there are many micro and macro social factors that explain my difficulties with writing, and how I can overcome them. As odd as it may sound, my writing this paper has contributed to my sociological understanding of why I have had so much difficulty with writing, and whether I can do anything to improve it.

Coming into my second year of college, the initial shock has worn off. Exams, stress, grades—all of it—become a norm for the average college student by then. I thought my own transition to college was rather smooth. Yet, one thing that never seems to change, something that has continued to follow me from high-school to college, is writing. Research papers, analytical essay, argumentative essays. I have always struggled with writing essays. Throughout the years it has grown to be a serious hindrance to my writing abilities.

In my first year of college, I remember writing an argumentative essay. It wasn't a particularly hard paper but I remember spending more than six hours working on it. I still can recall the frequent pauses in between my writing. Every time, I would try to draw myself away from finishing it. Although I did finish and did well, it was an excruciating memory. Rather than solving the problem, I have become used to facing it as a continuing mental challenge. Every single essay required hours of meticulous writing that challenged my mind.

However, sociology presents itself as an interesting opportunity to explore my difficulties in writing. Rather than continuing to endure another painful paper

Thanh Pham is an undergraduate student majoring in sociology at the University of Massachusetts Boston. He wrote this paper while enrolled in the First Year Seminar, Soc. 110G-2: "Insiders/Outsiders," instructed by Mohammad H. Tamdgidi (Associate Professor of Sociology at UMass Boston) during the Fall 2010 semester.

because of my writing problem, I can write about my writing problem from a sociological perspective. Using the **sociological imagination,** it is possible to link the difficulty in my writing to real social problems. What is interesting is that this isn't just another paper for a class. Writing about my writing difficulty could help me confront it directly and learn how to overcome my problem.

Immediately, I am able to illustrate the severity of my mental struggles with writing from this assignment alone. Though originally I was enthusiastic about the project, it has been several days and I have not even begun it. Procrastination is a funny thing; I always seem to find an excuse and justification for not doing it. Music, games, TV, almost anything can disrupt my concentration. Almost all my essays end up being typed at the last moment. So, why does this happen? I procrastinate all the time but eventually I still complete the essay.

Perhaps the issue isn't a matter of time management but rather my personal feelings and experience toward writing itself. To be honest, the mental and technical difficulties that I encounter with writing have become almost unbearable. The experiences of long hours, mental exhaustion, stress and insomnia have created a strong distaste for writing. However, I have always believed writing is necessary in the academic and personal worlds. Yet, these negative experiences have deterred my ability and self-esteem in writing. The poor level of confidence in my writing can be linked to my own **self-presentation**. I am constantly afraid that my writing skill isn't effective at all. Studies done on the behavior of procrastination show that the behavior is connected to one's self-presentation. "Protection of self-esteem through self-presentation has a role in why high trait procrastinators behaviorally procrastinate" (Bui 4). The study found that procrastination is a behavior that prevents the negative effects on one's self-esteem. In the self-presentation, the person wants to protect his or her own self-esteem from feeling shame and failure. Procrastinating delays those feelings. It is possible that I procrastinate because I want to protect myself from experiencing failure in my writing. However, procrastination has a limited effect. I cannot avoid writing my essay forever. Sooner or later I would have to write.

Once again, I want to emphasis the incredible amount of difficulty I face in writing. From thought to paper, process is often lost. I never have a clear structure in mind when I am writing. Pause after pause I would suffer from writing blocks. The entire process then becomes ridiculously slow. It would take me hours to complete a single page. When I would finally finish, the feelings of frustration and fatigue don't go away. I get to do it all over again in writing future assignments. It has been the same thing with every single paper since high-school. The sick feeling of spending hours on a single essay with no satisfaction in completing it is rather annoying. Unlike most people, my writing isn't a continuous flow. It's a constant struggle with sentence after sentence. There isn't a clear view of my thought process. The entire essay often becomes fragmented. My writing ends up lost in transition. Neither my thoughts nor feelings connect with the words and concepts. I am not actively linking the words with the actual structure of the essay. In other words, I feel like my writing is superficial. The essay becomes a bunch of words with no underlying meaning.

Sociologically, I feel a sense of disillusion from my academic work. Paper after paper, there is no sense of attachment to the work that I produce. In the book *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions*, James Pennebaker suggests that "Writing about the emotional upheavals has been found to improve the physical and mental health" (40). Pennebaker believes

writing does open up your emotions. The problem is, my writing is often emotionally lacking. I can never put it down on paper. It usually occurs during academic writing where I am forced to worry about grammar, mechanics, structure. Thoughts and feelings are lost and a writing block occurs. In his other book we read for class, *Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma & Emotional Upheaval*, Pennebaker offers the solution of free writing for to the writing block. "Stream of consciousness … the idea behind this type of writing is that you simply track your thoughts and feelings on paper as they occur" (61). While the method does allow you to write consciously, writing an essay is completely different. Academic writing presents a specific setting. You are forced to worry about criticism which does set the concept of writing in a different environment. You don't really think about your feelings or thoughts but rather the length of the page, grammar, time and ultimately grades. It hinders a person's ability to write thoughtfully about the topic. While the purpose of academic writing is to help you became a better writer, the pressure of the academic setting can be counterintuitive. My mental struggles with writing always happen in an academic setting. I am constantly worried about the grades rather than my own thoughts and feelings about the subject matter of the paper. Over the years my mind when writing has become even more detached. Often times it becomes repetitive or fragmented. It is clear that the difficulties I face in writing essays involves an inner issue: my feelings about writing itself.

Yet, why do I continue to write without considering my own thoughts and feelings? Using the sociological imagination, I can relate my writing to the concepts of anomie and alienation. "Alienation in all its meanings has been tied to industrialization" (Fischer 1). Alienation, according to Karl Marx, happens when an employee or worker feels no attachment to the product

that he or she produces. The concept of anomie originated from Emile Durkheim "In this state, selfish drives prevail, and moral standards no longer apply…. If social integration declines, people get disoriented; they developed [sic] feelings of insecurity and deprivation and they question the legitimacy of social values" (Graeff and Mehlkop 2). Anomie occurs when an individual begins to feel distant from their social norms and institutions, losing their sense of belonging to a **social order** of life. This is the exact sensation that occurs with my academic work. The essays that I produce have little or no meaning to me. There are no emotional efforts or interest in the process or the product.

At the beginning of my paper, I referred to my transition to college life. College is a time when the concept of **self-identity** becomes prominent. Even if I am not aware of it, **conformity** does take place. Studies done on college students "suggest that the adult sense of estrangement is at least partially a generalization of attitudes and feelings about self and others developed early in life" (Klein and Gould 2). The development of my **self** constructs my own identity. "Humans must construct their own reality, how that reality is transmitted from one generation to the next and routinely confirmed, and some implications for understanding the relation of the individual to society" (Berger and Luckmann 7). Yet, if this is all true, then the root of my problems lies in my own **socialization** and internalization of society. In the past five years, I have often questioned who I am and what my beliefs are. Recently, I have fallen into a period of disillusionment, not knowing what to do or believe. I began to experience detachment from my social norms. Like my writing, my life seems like a fragmented story, no direction at all.

However, I am beginning to notice the similarities between my writing struggles and my own life. The frequent pauses in my writing also occur in my everyday life. At

times I don't know what I am doing with my life. The time that it takes for me to complete an essay reflects on the speed of my own life. The concept of **speed culture** comes to mind here: "From the kitchen … to the computer, the speed imperative may very well be re-shaping the very mental structures which frame our expectations, experience and interpretations—this important realm of consciousness is called common sense" (Gottschalk 36). We live in a society where speed and time is most desirable. We want to do everything faster. Speed is power. Because I spend a ridiculous amount time writing essays, I do wish I could do it faster. But the problem is that writing is an intricate process. The faster you go, the less you understand. In doing so your writing becomes less thoughtful and more superficial.

For example, the construction of social reality relies heavily on our interpretation of **symbols**. "Symbols are abstractions, their use allows us to transcend our immediate environments and to have experiences that are not rooted in the here and now" (Sandstrom 18). When we fail to remember these concepts in our lives, we tend to forget about the meanings that matter the most. These **islands of meaning** create our own reality; "In this way society teaches us how to perceive our world, shape it into discrete islands of meaning, and construct reality" (Zerubavel 23). But for me it is difficult to see these islands of meaning. It has always been difficult for me to understand my life. While we are often unaware of the construction of the social reality, it does happen. The trouble I have in interpreting my life has led to difficulties in understanding my emotions. Unable to understand my emotions, I struggle in writing.

But, understanding the problems that we face in our everyday lives using the sociological imagination can help us link macro and micro levels of social analysis. It shows me that almost anything can be applied to the sociological imagination. In one example of the sociological imagination, E. M. Walsh, a former UMass Boston student, writes in her article entitled "Understanding Fear Using My Sociological Imagination" about how her own fear was developed from socialization. She writes, "From this vantage point, it becomes clear that my fear has been the result of socialization. The fear instilled in me due to my father's sterility and lack of emotion was a product of primary socialization and shaped me as a growing, learning, thinking individual" (Walsh 3). Some of these interpersonal issues could be linked to my own problem with writing. Another former UMass Boston student, Minxing Zheng, explains in his article "Measures of Personal Success and Failure: A Self-Assessment, Applying the Sociological Imagination," how society's interpretation of the meanings of success and failure form his own beliefs, tradition, etc. "I just had my American Dream come true, owning my first house … but then I look even closely at myself: thirty one years old. I am still working on my first undergraduate degree; thirty-one years old, I haven't really done anything that is really meaningful other than just working and working to make money; thirty one years old" (Zheng 2).

By understanding my own problem with writing and how it is socially constructed, it is possible that I can find a way to overcome it. In his article, "Writers Blocked," Brian Griffin talks about how little things like a creative writing course can help relieve writers' block. "The next obvious thing about me in this conflict—of not fitting in and desperately wanted to fit in—has kept me writing assiduously over the years … The barrier of my alienation has been broken by the same writing, in the shape of my column in the newsletter" (Griffin 1). Griffin overcame his writing block by finding help and support. In *Opening Up*, James Pennebaker notes that often

times we can deal with stress, trauma, and death by writing about our thoughts and feelings: "In your writing explore your deepest thoughts and feelings in a self reflective way" (88). Inhibiting your emotions cause more stress and hinders your own identity and beliefs, he argues. A good example of this is illustrated in the movie *Good Will Hunting.* The main protagonist Will Hunting faces difficulties while searching for his own identity. During most of his life he bottled up all of his true thoughts and feelings that are inhibiting his emotions. But in the end he was able to express the feelings inside him. He then starts to understand who he was and begins to make his own choices. Writing or talking about our emotions does help in many ways. In *Writing to Heal*, Pennebaker states, "If we are worrying about things—including emotional upheavals in the past, we have less memory. Expressive writing frees working memory, thus allowing us to deal with more complicated issues in our lives" (9). While my writing difficulty has not yet changed, I do seem to understand more about it using the sociological imagination. Perhaps it is not about finding a solution but about understanding the process.

Yet, to understand the struggle that I face in writing, I need to realize that writing is an intricate process. The root of my writing dilemma goes beyond writing itself. The problem is neither grammatical nor biological. Ultimately, I am the one that created this difficulty within me. I am the one that constructed a self-identity and self-presentation and meaning related to writing. Therefore, the problems I face in writing are also at least partly of my own making. However, while I do not intend to blame my own problems on socialization, there is a distinction between the ***I and*** the ***me***. "The 'I' reacts to the self which arises through taking the attitudes of others. Through taking those attitudes, we have introduced the 'me' and we react to it as an 'I'" (Mead 158). Mead believes that the self

isn't just an internal part of every individual. Instead, it is a dynamic social structure that is both subjective and objective.

Again, I am not using Mead or micro sociology as an excuse for my own writing dilemma. Rather, I wonder whether my problem can be analyzed using micro theories of society? Moreover, is it possible that my own writing difficulty may be linked to the broader social issues that plague society? This is ironic because I have assumed that no one else has a problem in writing; therefore I have criticized mainly myself.

Charles Horton Cooley's concept of the ***looking glass self*** points to how we shape our own beliefs about ourselves based on assuming the opinions of others. "As we see our face, figure, and dress in the glass and are interested in them because they are ours, and pleased or otherwise with them according as they do or do no answer to what we should like them to be; so in imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manner, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on" (Cooley 153). As stated before, in other words, the difficulties I face in writing is not actually writing itself. Instead, the problem may lie in processes such as the looking glass self shaping the micro social structures and interactions of everyday life in relation with myself. My emotional struggles with writing may have something to do with how I have imagined others may view and judge me as a person and student.

Furthermore, the relationship between macro and micro sociology is intertwined. The everyday social interaction of our own lives reflects the social structure of our society. While it is difficult to illustrate how the specifics of my writing problem relates to the macro level social issues in society at this point, there is a subtle yet broad connection. The core of my problem (writing) is created through my own social interaction, socialization and self-interpretation. Therefore, this everyday problem setting a context for my struggles with writing can

be linked to larger social issues.

Often times we take it for granted that the ***social structure*** of our society is a static and solid entity. But in fact there is no such thing as social structure as solid object. Instead our social structure is fluid and created everyday by the social interaction between us. "A human society or group consists if people in association … exists necessarily in the form of people acting toward one another and thus engaging in social interaction" (Blumer 284). Because of ***symbolic interaction***, we are constantly creating meaning and interpreting it through social interaction.

Therefore, the problems we face in our daily lives reflect upon the broader social issues in society. Procrastination has always been a part of my mental struggles with writing. The reason behind my constant procrastination is how I interpret and attach explicit meanings to writing and academics. All my life I never considered achieving my fullest academic potential. I never seem to put enough effort in my schoolwork. I was able to get by with modest performance and decent grades with what I know by memory and a bit of luck. However, writing was an exception. It was hard. In papers and essays I am always forced to articulate my thoughts and reasoning and transition into academic writing.

Yet, for me the academic pressure and my parents' expectations have resulted in the further deterioration of my struggles with writing. My parents have always tried to push me further in my academic career. As it is the same with society, there is a level of academic expectation that every individual should achieve or gain. Again these are regular pressures that everyone experiences in society; the purpose of this social pressure is to help motivate the student toward academic success. Yet, can these expectations be responsible for the regression when the pressure of academic success becomes overwhelming? Bozick et al. write,

Rather, one's social-structural location, according to Bourdieu (1973, 1977), leaves a deep imprint on the psyche, determining habits, tastes and preferences, and extending to one's understood place in the social order … Over time the signals they receive neither consistently support nor temper an expectation to attend college … Owing to such developmental differences, they vary in their utility as guides or roadmaps during the transition out of high schools. (Bozick, Alexander, Entwisle, Dauber and Kerr 20)

However, the difficulties that I face in writing were not caused by my inability to articulate my thoughts down on paper. The real problem was my mental attitude toward writing. I had little motivation in academics to begin with. But motivation alone is not the problem. Primary socialization and social expectations create academic pressure on every student. For example, under the pressure of meeting the parents' expectations a student experiences regression and distress. "When perceived or actual parental expectations fail to coincide with college students' perceived self-performance, college students report more affective distress (i.e., anger, depression and anxiety) … Given the finding of this study, college students' perception of communication reciprocity with their parents predicted significantly college students' depression and anxiety" (Agliata and Renk 13). These are the same pressures that all students face in their academic career.

According to the authors' research conducted in Wisconsin, the expectation of college attendance varied given the data variable. However, the research did conclude that primary and secondary socialization are the main factors in the expectation for attending college. There is,

to be sure, a strong connection between my writing endeavors and the internalization of academic expectation. The reason that my writing difficulties continue to prevail is because of what I have internalized as the interpretations and perceptions of academic success in society. For me, my parents' expectation and society's definition of academic success have manifested in the fear of failure in my mind.

Writing is difficult for me because it requires me to put effort and motivation to accomplish it. My motivation is then hindered by the fear of failure, failing to accomplish the level of expectation from both my parents and society. I am unable to prevent this fear of failure, however, if I lack motivation and efforts. If I never try my best then I never would know if I reached these expectations. To solve my writing dilemma it is necessary for me to overcome my mental inertia and put a significant amount of effort into accomplishing it. Yet, what if it was not enough? Even if I did put considerable effort into writing, would it realize my parents' academic expectations or society's meaning of academic success? Doubting myself I will continue to procrastinate. Is it possible that I can protect myself from the feeling of failure and doubt? If not, I will continue to struggle with writing. Sadly, this also means that I would never experience the realization of my own academic potential. The only way to truly overcome my writing difficulties is to overcome the internalized meaning of academic success within me. Can I?

If it were that easy, we wouldn't have any large scale social problems. The social structure has been deeply internalized within us. It is assumed that social structure is something 'natural' and exist on its own. Ultimately, we are the ones who construct our **social reality** through our own social interaction. We are the ones who constructed the meanings guiding society. But we are unaware of the amount power we have because we have already internal-ized our own constructed social reality. We then take it for granted that our own reality is 'naturally' given to us.

The same personal troubles that occur in my own writing experience are similar to larger social issues. Even at a micro level of society I am already constrained by my perceptions of social expectations. These problems are reinforced by our constant social interactions. In doing so we have created a prison around ourselves, yet we do not realize that we are the architect. But, it is because of our social structure that we are able to effectively reproduce the socially constructed reality. We continue to sustain our social reality through our social interaction through **face-work** and **rituals**. "The term face may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by line others assume he has taken during a particular contact … a person may be said to have, or be in, or maintain face when the line he effectively takes presents an image of him that is internally consistent, that is supported by judgments and evidence conveyed by other participants" (Goffman 236). Rituals, on the other hand, work with face in order to protect and maintain its values. The concept of 'face-work' is connected to Goffman's **Dramaturgical Perspective**. Society is a stage and we are the actors. The actors act on stage. We maintain a face during our everyday life. Yet, often times we don't realize that in our everyday life we maintain this social interaction. We are the ones who have created these social constraints and inequalities by reproducing the social structure.

Until we realize that we are socially bound by our constructed reality, going beyond them and solving social inequalities will remain difficult. Although, we do not know about it the everyday issues we face reflect broader social problems. For example, when we think about the concept of self, we often think about the single self within us. In the film *Billy Elliot*, a young

boy named Billy Elliot discovers that he has a passion for ballet and dancing. However his passion ultimately comes into conflict with the expectations of his family and society. But in the end he chooses to become a dancer because of his mother. Although physically she is dead and not around, Billy has internalized his mother's will within him. The self isn't a single entity. It continually becomes an object or subject through social interaction from relationships, emotions, etc. The self that manifest itself as his mother is developed by their strong bond. It is also true that my own writing problem is based on a self in me. This self in me has been socially constructed to take on meanings of my life and society in a particular way. This is the self in me that takes on the concept of academic success as if it is a natural thing.

However, the film *Tuesdays With Morrie* illustrated a different perspective about our society. The film is based on a book also entitled *Tuesdays With Morrie* by Mitch Albom, who wrote about the real life of Morrie Schwartz, a former sociologist diagnosed with ALS, a terminal disease. In the film and real life, Morrie Schwartz knew he was going to die, so he used it as an opportunity to teach others about dying. In his final days, Morrie teaches his former student, Mitch Albom, a lesson about death and love. Although, his final lesson includes many social themes and values, ultimately he explains the socially constructed constraints around love and death. He argues that society has created negative connotation of death. "When you learn how to die you learn how to live" (Morrie Schwartz). In coming to terms with death we learn how to love. Death, therefore, allows us to see the true values of love. In society, openly speaking about death or even sometimes love does not happen often. It is because we have created and constructed the meanings of death through social interaction. Yet is it possible that we are forgetting the intrinsic value of love and

death by not talking about it?

In later chapters of *Opening Up*, Pennebaker illustrates how inhibition of traumatic events can take place in larger social organizations. After the assassination of J.F.K. in Dallas, the city was viewed with animosity by the rest of the Nation. "Many endured humiliating incidents that suggested that the rest of the country held them personally responsible for the assassination" (Pennebaker). The impact of J.F.K.'s death was able to render an entire city in a state of shame. Then it is possible for a concept like death, and inhinitive attitudes toward it, to be given meaning and value throughout an entire society. Again, the relationship between macro and micro sociology is illustrated here. Yet, we in society society are the ones who construct these values, which are responsible for who we are. So, is Morrie Schwartz right? Should we change our perception of death by embracing the concept of loving one another?

Although I have overstated numerous times, writing has always been a key problem in my life; yet I have increasingly become aware that writing is merely the surface of the problem. Using the sociological imagination, I can see that the roots of my problems go beyond the realm of academics. The problem is not writing but my own mental attitude toward writing. Through interpretation and meanings I am the one who constructed the issue. As an everyday personal issue this also reflects upon the broader social problems. Yet, now that I understand the full extent of my own writing problem, what can I do?

In later chapters of *Opening Up*, Pennebaker suggests that writing "should be viewed as preventive maintenance. The value of writing or talking about our thoughts and feelings lies in reducing the work of inhibition and in organizing our complicated mental and emotional lives" (197). One aspect of my writing problem is the translation of my emotions and

thoughts to paper. In the later exercises of *Writing to Heal*, Pennebaker asks the students to free write—in various perspectives. "One possibility may be that if you can look at an upsetting event from a different angle, you are better able to stand back from it. In other words, the ability to adopt alternative perspectives both requires and reflects a certain detachment from the subject you are thinking about" (101).

Much of that exercise reminds me of the exploration of my writing in this paper using the sociological imagination. I was able to detach myself from the biases I had in writing and look at the problem from a sociological perspective. Another interesting writing exercise Pennebaker suggested was writing in front of a mirror. "Look at yourself in the mirror. Gaze into your own eyes; look at your face. See yourself as others see you and as you see yourself. While looking at your image, think about a significant personal issue and how it relates to where you are in your life, your connections to others, and who you really are … begin writing" (120).

Ironically, while I originally thought I was self-reflecting when writing about my mental struggles with writing, I didn't see myself but rather the perception of others' opinions about me. It was exactly like looking into the glass mirror. It is yet unclear whether this exercise improved my writing or hindered it. Pennebaker's method is subjective and experimental. However, after attempting several exercises, I did find that my writing skill has improve overall, even though most of the improvements were related to technical writing skills. Having explored the sociological aspect of my mental struggles with writing in this paper, I am hopeful that one day I can take pleasure in writing, even if it is an academic paper.

WORKS CITED

Bozick, Robert, et al. "Framing the Future: Revisiting the Place of Educational Expectations in Status Attainment." *Social Forces* 88.5 (2010): 2027-2052. *SocINDEX with Full Text*. EBSCO. Web. 14 Dec. 2010.

Bui, Ngoc H. "Effect of Evaluation Threat on Procrastination Behavior." *Journal of Social Psychology* 147.3 (2007): 197-210. Web.

Cahill, Spencer, and Kent L. Sandstrom. *Inside Social Life: Readings in Sociological Psychology and Microsociology*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.

Fischer, Claude S. "On Urban Alienations and Anomie: Powerlessness and Social Isolation." *American Sociological Review* 38.3 (1973): 311-26. Web.

Graeff, Peter, and Guido Mehlkop. "When Anomie Becomes a Reason for Suicide: A New Macro-Sociological Approach in the Durkheimian Tradition." *European Sociological Review* 23.4 (2007): 521-35. Web.

Griffin, Brian. "Writers Blocked." *Community Care*.1633 (2006): 24-. Web.

Kanter Agliata, Allison, and Kimberly Renk. "College Students' Affective Distress: The Role of Expectation Discrepancies and Communication." *Journal of Child & Family Studies* 18.4 (2009): 396-411. *SocINDEX with Full Text*. EBSCO. Web. 14 Dec. 2010.

Klein, Edward B., and Laurence J. Gould. "Alienation and Identification in College Women." *Journal of personality* 37.3 (1969): 468. Web.

Pennebaker, James W. *Opening Up: the Healing Power of Expressing Emotions*. New York: Guildford, 1997. Print.

Pennebaker, James W. *Writing to Heal: a Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma & Emotional Upheaval*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2004. Print.

Walsh, E. M. "Understanding Fear using My Sociological Imagination." *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 7.3 (2009): 117-36. Web.

Zheng, Minxing. "Measures of Personal Success and Failure." *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 7.3 (2009): 147-53. Web.

Films:

Billy Elliot. By Stephen Daldry and Lee Hall. Universal Focus, 2000. DVD.

Good Will Hunting. Dir. Gus Van Sant. Miramax Films, 1997. DVD

Tuesdays with Morrie. Dir. Mick Jackson. 1999.