5-2021

Developing the Facilitative Health and Well-being Tool: Freeing Writing

William O. Fogarty

State University of New York College at Buffalo - Buffalo State College, wfog35@gmail.com

Developing the Facilitative Health and Well-being Tool: *Freeing Writing*

by

William O. Fogarty

An Abstract of a Project
in
Creativity and Change Leadership

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
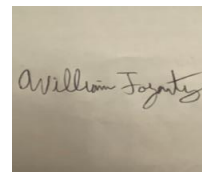of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2021

ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

Developing the Facilitative Health and Well-being Tool: *Freeing Writing*

Research into processes of self, including self-concept clarity, identity, and meaning and purpose in life, has demonstrated that human beings that feel they know themselves tend to experience positive health and well-being outcomes, while people who feel they don't know themselves tend to experience more negative health and well-being outcomes. These findings indicate that knowing oneself is essential. Thus, the facilitative tool I am creating with this Master's Project, *Freeing Writing,* combines the power of self-knowledge and self-discovery with the healing power of expressive writing. In this manuscript, I synthesize the scientific research, Design Thinking process, and real-world experiences which contributed to the development of this tool, which will help facilitate well-being outcomes for participants in current and future professional endeavors.

_____
Your Signature

_____05/13/2021_____
Date

Buffalo State
State University of New York
Creativity and Change Leadership Department

Developing the Facilitative Health and Well-being Tool: *Freeing Writing*

A Project in
Creativity and Change Leadership

by

William O. Fogarty

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2021

Buffalo State
State University of New York
Creativity and Change Leadership Department

Developing the Facilitative Health and Well-being Tool: *Freeing Writing*

A Project in
Creativity and Change Leadership

by

William O. Fogarty

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science
May 2021

Dates of Approval:

_____04/28/2021_____   _____Dr. Gerard Puccio_____
                                    Name of Project Adviser
                                    Academic Title

_____04/28/2021_____   _____William O. Fogarty_____
                                    Name of Student
                                    Student

Copyright Page:

Dedication and Acknowledgment:

I would like to begin by extending a tremendous amount of thanks to Dr. Gerard Puccio, Dr. John Cabra, Dr. Sue Keller-Mathers, Dr. Roger Firestein, Dr. Selcuk Acar, and Laura Switalski for instructing me over this past two years. My personal growth under your guidance has been exponential. Words fall short of expressing the gratitude I feel.

I would like to thank my friend Matei Schwartz for beating me for the position as Graduate Assistant, as it was a crucial element of the circuitous path that brought me to the completion of this project. I'd also like to thank my Cohort members, the Empower Rangers for all the emotional support, reminders about deadlines, and answers to the questions which I might have known, if I had just read the syllabus a bit better.

I would like to thank the Inheritance Project's cofounding team: Katya Stepanov, Mallory Combemale, and Ariel Figueroa, who helped inspire me to pursue my personal legend fearlessly and whole-heartedly.

I would like to thank my parents, Beth and Jim Fogarty, for their unwavering support. They have helped me through the highest of highs and the lowest of lows, and never stopped believing in me. It is thanks to their care, love, and positive influence that I have made it thus far.

I'd also like to thank my extended Osborn and Fogarty families, and specifically my Uncle John Osborn for pushing me to attend the 2018 Creative Problem Solving Institute. It was there I found my path to meaning and purpose in life.

Finally, I would like to thank my ancestor, Alex Osborn, for passing down the magic of creative thinking. Creativity is unquestionably part of my inheritance, and who knows who, what, and where I would be without it.

Section One: Background to the Project

Following My Calling

"The circuitous route is often the most important route."

This statement came hurtling forward from the past to hit me like a ton of bricks. Feeling nostalgic, I had been reading the Statement of Intent I wrote for my application to the Creativity and Change Leadership program at SUNY Buffalo State. This document highlighted many important aspects of my journey—the influences of my father and great grandfather, the infectious and boisterous fun of the creative community, and my deep desire to find meaning and purpose in life. But nothing jumped out to me as much as that single line.

"The circuitous route is often the most important route."

If that doesn't describe my life experience, I don't know what will. I have never been good at following the prescribed path. I even let go of a position that promised to meet my financial needs for years to come in order to follow my heart's true desires. The pursuit of my true calling is my deepest meaning and purpose in life. I am willing to follow wherever it leads me, and that direction seems to be anywhere but straight ahead.

Life-altering Tools: Self-Expression and Self-Discovery

Part of the reason that my life path is not straight forward is that I have developed a keen sense of self-awareness that helps guide me to my next steps. This self-awareness has been cultivated by two tools that have helped me immensely over the years. I often make assertion that self-expression and self-discovery have had life-saving results for me. This is not an exaggeration. Whether I was 16 and struggling to find reasons to continue living, or 21 and on

the verge of a psychological meltdown on a transatlantic flight, I was able to use expressive writing as a release valve for overwhelming negative emotions. Reexamining my expressive writing at a later time helped show me the processes and patterns that had led me to these points of crisis. Simply put, self-expression and self-discovery have always been there for me when I needed it most… and sometimes I have *really* needed it.

When I was 16 and struggling through daily anxiety and suicidal depression, I started a Tumblr account, publishing my writing under a pseudonym. This provided the unique intersection of anonymity and publicity to vent my pent-up Nihilism in a way that helped me feel heard and seen. I would unleash whatever was inside me onto the page—rage, anger, despair, grief. Deep hurt of all kinds would rush out of me. I would survive that moment. Then, I would do it again. After a few days, I would return to the writing to process and digest what was written. This simple act of revisiting my writing helped me to make deliberate changes to my thought patterns that improved my well-being. One specific example was, after reading the repetitive, negative mantra "life sucks and the world sucks", I made the decision to not speak or think that way. The power and energy of these words was dragging me into an abyss. I felt I could not hold onto this belief and survive. It was a struggle to do so, but with time and practice, this specific thought pattern eventually left my conscious mind (though anxiety and depression persist). I later disclosed this story to one of my Communication professors, who was shocked.

"Wow", she said, "cognitive reframing rarely works that well. How were you able to do it?"

"Well, I can't explain it fully," I replied, "but I know it had a lot to do with writing."

When I was 21 and trapped on a transatlantic flight on the verge of a severe panic attack, self-expression provided a similar function. I had been disconnected from expressive writing for

about three years and was only writing as a necessity for my college classes. The airplane was lonely, and my body and mind were under enormous stress. To make matters worse, I had received a disturbing phone call just before boarding the plane. It was a red eye flight from New York to Milan, about 8 hours long, and I simply could not relax. My mind was racing, my body was rigid, and try as I might, sleep was evasive. The harder I tried to sleep, the further that sleep eluded me.

I finally sat up and looked out the window, which elicited a huge physical shock. All I could see was the flashing light at the tip of the wing — no moon and no stars were visible. I began to feel dizzy and nauseous. My heart began beating so fast that it felt ready to burst out of my chest. It felt like the walls of the plane were closing in on me, and that reality was slipping away from me. I could not stop staring out the pitch-black window, feeling as though I was about to dive headfirst into the abyss. Instinctively, I pulled out my phone and began typing furiously. I have no idea how long I wrote for. I typed and typed and typed, feeling the physical energy flowing through me, until finally letting out a rattling exhale. I was exhausted. Something had finally released. I experienced incredible relief in surviving that moment.

In doing so, I learned to use the tool of self-expression again and again during my time abroad. By the time the trip ended, cathartic writing and further reflection helped me complete a book of poetry. Someday I hope to publish it, but any external success with writing will always be secondary to the well-being it has gifted me.

This is simply the pattern of my life. When I am writing, I feel I know myself better. When I am not writing, I feel I know myself worse. Often, the well-being I experience correlates with the degree to which I perceive to know myself. Expressive writing provides me both the experience of catharsis and the ability to self-examine. It is truly the intersection of self-

expression and self-discovery. Over time, however, writing has developed into more than just a therapeutic tool to know myself better. I have also learned to write for pure enjoyment—a truly life enhancing practice.

Studying Italian Futurism

One of the major breakthroughs that helped facilitate joy in my writing occurred shortly after the experience on the plane. I was attending my Contemporary Italian Poetry lecture which was taught completely in Italian. Even after seven years of studying the language, I was just barely getting by. Then, everything changed with a lesson entitled "Futurismo."

"I Futuristi", or the Italian Futurists, were a radical group of artists who sought to liberate both art and artists through the destruction of convention and form. In class, we explored how the Futurists set out to destroy syntax, line structure, traditional cadence, and all other poetic conventions. They made poetry that was meant to mimic the sounds of real life, relying heavily on onomatopoeia. The wrote in giant circles instead of lines. They even let a computer generate its own poetry! I was, for the first time in my life, given explicit freedom to write whatever the hell I wanted, however the hell I wanted.

O, how delicious it was, this taste of freedom, this gift of removing self-censorship from the writing process! My art could be whatever it wished, without trying to control it! I wrote poetry that didn't even rhyme! It was truly exhilarating to say, "Goodbye Iambic Pentameter, goodbye convention, goodbye form." O, the joy in finally writing the way I wished!

Expressive writing became the only container of my life that was safe from negative judgement and self-criticism. It was a sanctuary where I could write or say anything I thought or felt. For the first time, writing sprung forth with joy, laughter, and absurdity, rather than just

catharsis. For the first time, I set out to capture the beauty of the world through words and sentences and sounds. What a shift in my being!

Facilitating Emotional Exploration

Having been so blessed to practice constructive tools that helped improve my well-being, I brought a strong intention with me when I joined the Department of Creativity and Change Leadership in May of 2019. I was going to learn to help others transform their lives and connect to greater well-being. At the root of that sentiment was a wish to utilize the transformational power of creativity and writing to do so. As I arrived on campus, I believed deeply that creativity would help me to help others, and in doing so I would move towards my meaning and purpose in life. So far, that has certainly been the case.

I spoke with an alumnus of the program, Blair Miller, before moving to Buffalo and was given some amazing advice. He suggested I use each course as an opportunity to connect to my interest. By doing so, I would prepare myself for the life that I wanted to live as a post-graduate. Since that conversation, I have dedicated every self-directed aspect of my program to exploring the relationship between creativity, well-being, and personal transformation. It is now with even greater conviction and backed by scientific evidence (Acar et al., 2020) that I insist that creativity is an essential life skill for all human beings that want to connect to well-being, health, fulfillment, meaning, and purpose.

Throughout my studies, I became familiar with the benefits and strengths of Creative Problem Solving (CPS). CPS is defined as "a comprehensive cognitive and affective system built on our natural creative processes that deliberately ignites creative thinking, and as a result, generates creative solutions and change" (Puccio, Murdock, & Mance, p. 29, 2010). I recognized

that CPS had tremendous transformative power. I was inspired by hearing that the great Sid Parnes, co-founder of my program, had described CPS as "therapeutic but not therapy." I was amazed to hear stories of radical personal and professional transformation from advanced CPS practitioners. Yet, despite claims of being affectively comprehensive, I also saw classmates and practitioners that were unable to solve their social and emotional problems by using Creative Problem Solving.

As I continued to learn more, I learned that CPS is primarily focused on the development of cognitive skills and the mastery of cognitive processes. In this way, CPS was not designed to solve emotional and social problems. Thus, I recognized that integrating cognitive tools and cognitive skills with affective tools and skills had tremendous transformative potential for affective challenges. Thus, I set about combining affective tools with CPS principles to help facilitate emotional, psychological, and spiritual transformation. This led to numerous experiences synthesizing CPS with non-CPS tools to create novel and useful facilitative wellness experiences.

The first tool that I integrated with CPS is called *Fear Setting*, developed by Tim Ferriss (2017). *Fear Setting* is a modern twist on an ancient stoic practice called *Premeditatio Malorum*— the premeditation of evil (Ferriss, 2017). It is the exercise of imagining what might go wrong, taking premeditated action to prevent damage from occurring, or mitigating damage if it does occur (Ferriss, 2017). Ferriss's modern adaptation inherently involves elements of divergent thinking, imagination, and expressive writing. My addition was combining the tool with deliberate brainstorming, intuitive highlighting, and the divergent and convergent thinking principles. I delivered two well-received presentations in class with this adaptation of the tool,

which became experiences that helped lay the foundation for the development of this Master's Project.

Another experience I drew upon in creating this Master's Project was the delivery of a facilitation, *Your Creative Wellness*, at the virtual 2020 Creative Problem Solving Institute (CPSI). This facilitative experience integrated divergent and convergent thinking tools with periods of self-expressive art creation using the modality of the participants choice: drawing, painting, or writing. This facilitation was described by participants as "transformative", "relaxing," and "much needed."

Both these facilitative adaptations provided a valuable experience of integrating cognitive and emotional tools to help facilitate wellness. They also helped me converge on a meaningful, novel, and useful (also known as creative) Master's Project. I was inspired to create a novel facilitative tool that combines the benefits of creative thinking with the emotional and physiological benefits of expressive writing.

Purpose and Description of the Project

The purpose of this culminating Master's Project was to create, test, and further develop a facilitative tool that integrated creative thinking and self-expression as a form of self-discovery. This tool is called *Freeing Writing.* In *Section Four: Outcomes*, the reader is provided an in-depth look at the creation, delivery, formatting, testing, development, and restructuring of this tool. In addition to this creative product, I learned and applied Design Thinking as a creativity framework to project manage the creation, delivery, and development of the facilitative tool. Finally, a literature review was conducted to assist in the scientific understanding of the two critical aspects of the tool: self and writing.

Thus, the intended outcomes of this semester were to:

- Effectively learn and apply Design Thinking as a project management framework;

- Compile and synthesize scholarly sources in a cohesive literature review;

- Create and deliver the facilitative tool; and

- Develop and modify the facilitative tool.

Section Two: Pertinent Literature or Resources

Scientifically Studying Self and Writing

The previous section examined my personal experience with self-expression, self-discovery, and expressive writing as relevant background that inspired the creation of this project. I also acknowledge that direct personal experience is powerful but limited in its generalizability. The importance of this has not been lost on me as the severity of the contemporary global pandemic has been intensified by first-person opinion, misinformation, and negation of the scientific process.

I spent the first year and a half of my program studying the social science of creativity and discovering powerful scientific evidence regarding the positive benefits of writing. The nature of the findings in the field of writing is fairly consistent, with research replicably demonstrating many positive benefits of practicing writing. As I began this project, however, I was cognizant of a personal gap in knowledge regarding the study of the self. Thus, I set about studying the complex and inter-related processes of self that comprise a human being.

Scope of Literature Review

As previously mentioned, the research regarding the positive benefits of writing is well documented and more straightforward. Studying the self, however, is a much more complex undertaking. Rather than attempting to be an exhaustive synthesis of the entire body of research, I have done my best to take the advice of legendary creativity scholar E. Paul Torrance by "Highlighting the Essence".

E. Paul Torrance considered Highlighting the Essence an important creativity skill (1979). He defined Highlighting the Essence as identifying key elements and understandings that are essential to comprehension of a particular topic (1979). Thus, to Highlight the Essence is to make a complex issue easily communicable to others. The scope of this literature review then, primarily consists of an investigation into the interrelated, dynamic processes by which a human being understands it's "self".

A Google Scholar search of the term "self-" brings up a variety of well-researched processes that meaningfully contribute to a human being's self-knowledge and self-understanding. The body of literature regarding self is thus nebulous, complex, intersectional, and nuanced, spanning the fields of sociology, anthropology, psychology, and spirituality. This presents a significant challenge to anyone curious enough to explore the human self through scientific literature.

To exhaustively explore a single process of self within a well-defined field (such as role identity) would be a Ph.D. worthy undertaking. Imagine then the enormity of the task of meaningfully synthesizing the multiple processes of self in their inter-related nuance. Thus, rather than attempting to synthesize any of the enormous bodies of literature to form definite conclusions, Highlighting the Essence of a few salient processes of self is a valiant and satisfactory scientific undertaking for the purpose of this project.

Research Questions Related to Self

Three key research questions that will help further understanding of self and assist in the development of the *Freeing Writing* tool are: 1) what are some of the salient processes of self? 2)

how are they related to and differentiated from one another? 3) how are they related to well-being?

Exploring Identity

It is intuitive to begin exploring self-related processes by examining the concept of identity due to its relevance in modern life. The topic of identity and identities is both salient within the scientific literature and within the shifting cultural norms of the 21st century. The subsequent subsections will explore how identity is conceptualized, the role that identity formation plays in human development over the lifespan, and the relationship between identity, health, and well-being. Identity will serve as a salient reference point in the exploration of other processes of self — by understanding how they are related to and differentiated from each other.

The first scholar in the field to discuss identity was Erikson as part of his theory of human development (Cote & Levine, 1987). He used the term "ego identity" to describe the process by which humans understand themselves in relation to the world over time (Cote & Levine, 1987). Erikson defined ego identity "a sense of self that is the ego's experience of itself as a temporally continuous entity with certain socially validated defining characteristics" (Cote & Levine, 1987, p. 275).

There are aspects of his initial postulation of identity that are have since been reconceptualized, and significant misunderstandings of his work that have caused misleading oversimplifications of identity formation. Both will be explored in this literature review.

 One contemporary reconceptualization of Erikson's understanding of identity is the related to his assertion that identity is a singular construct (Cote & Levine, 1987). An oversimplification of his description of identity, that Erikson himself refuted, is that identity

development is linear and static process which is completely resolved in adolescence (Cote & Levine, 1987). These distinctions are explored in the subsequent sections, helping to clarify what identity is and what it is not, and assist in Highlighting the Essence of identity.

Identity or Identities?

Despite Erikson's conceptualization that a human being has a singular identity, contemporary scholars conclude that identity is better conceptualized as *identities*, which are multiple and multifaceted (Carter & Bruene, 2019; Cote & Levine, 1987). Carter and Bruene (2019) defined identities as "internal positional designations or meaning structures that define an individual as a unique person, role player, or group member" (p. 5). This definition demonstrates the understanding of identity has shifted away from the singular identity model and towards a more intricate system of multiple identities by which an individual knows understands themselves in relation to the world. Furthermore, this definition separates identities into three categories—person, role, and social (Carter & Bruene, 2019). Exploring these differentiated categories of identities helps create an understanding of their function.

The first category of identities is person identities. According to Carter and Bruene (2019), "person identities represent who one is as a unique individual and are idiosyncratic attributes of one's personality" (p. 5). In other words, person identities differentiate an individual from other human beings based on their unique preferences and personality characteristics. This category of identities focuses on who a human knows themselves to be as an individual.

The second category of identities are role identities. Role identities differ from person identities because they involve behavioral norms regarding interactions with others in the world around them (Carter & Bruene, 2019). Role identities are defined as "meanings attached to a

status position that involves some behavioral expectation, such as being a student, worker, or parent" (Carter & Bruene, 2019, p. 6). These roles are often dialectic in nature, based on understanding one's individual role in relation to roles that others are occupying. Differences in understanding of the norms of roles exist across cultures, but role identities as a process appear to exist cross-culturally (Appiah, 2018; Carter & Bruenne, 2019).

The third category of identities are social or group identities. These describe one's identification with groups or organizations (Appiah, 2018; Carter & Bruenne, 2019). Identity scholar Kwame Appiah (2018) provides examples of social or group identities through his 5 C's of Identity framework. The five salient social identities he identifies are Culture, Country, Class, Creed, and Color (Appiah, 2018). This is reiterated by Carter and Breune (2019), who contend that "some have addressed social identities with regard to their distinct, qualitative differences, distinguishing social identities that are centered on religious belief, racial identification, or political preference" (p. 7). These social identities rely on shared meanings with other humans that identify or are identified in the same way (Appiah, 2018; Carter & Bruene, 2019).

Distinguishing social identities through norms involves assimilation or a differentiation (Appiah, 2018). An example of identity differentiation is a person identifies a [*social identity]*, therefore they do not [*behave in a non-normative way*]. An example of identity assimilation would be a person identifies as a [*social identity*], therefore they [*behave in a normative way*].

This contemporary differentiation between identity and distinct subcategories of identities highlights that they are multiplicitous, complex, normative, and context-driven cognitive structures that help an individual understand who they are in distinction from and in relation to the world outside the self.

Identities: Static or Dynamic?

It is important to recall that Erikson's definition of identity was conceptualized in accordance with his framework for human development, which theorized that human development and progression was a sequential process (Cote & Levine, 1987; Sokol, 2009). For human beings to achieve their potential, he postulated that there was a well-defined sequence of developmental tensions through which they must progress (Cote & Levine, 1987; Sokol, 2009). Each tension signified a developmental stage that needed to be resolved for the individual to progress to the next developmental stage (Cote & Levine, 1987; Sokol, 2009). This model's 5th stage of development, highlighted by tension between identity and role confusion, was theorized to be resolved (in well-developed individuals) during adolescence (Cote & Levine, 1987; Sokol, 2009. Erikson did not believe, however, that identity remained stagnant after adolescence. Instead, this became a common misconception and oversimplification which has distorted mainstream understanding of identity for over half a century.

Instead, Erikson proposed a "life cycle notion" of identity formation, which meant that "ego identity elements arrived at during the identity stage [are] transformed in ways relevant to issues related to the particular circumstances of the individual's [6th stage] intimacy, [7th stage] generativity, and [8th stage] ego integrity… in response to the exigencies of the social world" (Cote & Levine, p. 276, 1987).

In other words, he asserted that ego identity was negotiated both in the Identity versus Role Confusion [5th stage] of human development, but also fluctuated throughout the course of the following developmental [6th, 7th, and 8th] stages in response to significant life events (Cote & Levine, 1987).

Contemporary research affirms Erikson's view that that identity integration occurs over the course of the lifetime and is altered in response to external stimuli (Carter & Bruene, 2019; La Guardia, 2009). Studies demonstrate that perceived identity fluctuates in response to significant life events or by self-directed exploration (Carter & Bruene, 2019; La Guardia, 2009). One example is that positive and negative major life events are significantly related to increased perceived identity change (Carter & Bruene, 2019). These findings, in addition to Erikson's own words, are a clear rebuke to the misunderstanding of identity development as a stagnant once resolved in adolescence.

Furthermore, identity scholar Kwame Appiah asserts that identities change based on context, with individuals utilizing various role and social identities throughout the course of the day (2018). Thus, the ability to understand and negotiate our identities is an incredibly valuable quotidian life skill (Appiah, 2018).

With the understanding that identities are renegotiated in response major life events as well as changing daily based on context, identities can be understood as dynamic and developed over the course of an individual's life. There are other important considerations, however, outside of how identity is developed. It is also necessary to understand how individuals are identified by others, which is related to [unjust] life-or-death outcomes in the United States and abroad (Phelan & Link, 2013).

Identities: SES, Privilege, and Health

Kwame Appiah wisely notes that identities not only influence how the individual sees the world, but how the world sees an individual (Appiah, 2018). This is significant because for the way an individual identifies and is identified influences numerous health outcomes due to

discrimination that an individual experiences throughout the course of their lifetime (Phelan & Link, 2013). A few examples of salient identities that influence discrimination are racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, and ableness identities.

Furthermore, aspects of identities that ae highly visible and cannot be changed influence a wide variety of life outcomes (Appiah, 2018; Crawford, 2006). A useful tool for understanding how identities relate to discrimination is the privilege horizon. The privilege comprises an x axis with dominant, privileged identities above the x axis, and non-dominant, less privileged identities below the x axis (Crawford, 2006). For each identity the individual inherits or inhabits that is non-dominant, the privilege horizon lowers (Crawford, 2006). The lower an individual's privilege horizon, the more prone this individual is to experiencing discrimination, further compounded by the degree that each disadvantaged identity is visible to and known by others, as well as the salience of inhabiting that identity within the surrounding culture (Crawford, 2006).

A simplified example is that the average black homosexual woman faces greater discrimination and has less privilege than the average white homosexual woman. The average white homosexual woman faces more discrimination and has less privilege than the average white heterosexual woman. The average white heterosexual woman faces more discrimination and has less privilege than the average white heterosexual man. Thus, the discrimination an individual faces is compounded by the number of identities they have which are non-dominant (Crawford, 2006). This is salient because greater discrimination is directly related to lower expected health and well-being outcomes.

Identities, because of discrimination, undeservedly impact an individual's Socioeconomic Status (SES). SES is defined by the American Psychological Association (2021) as "the social standing or class of an individual or group". The implications of having lower SES are severe,

leading to significant health and well-being disparities such as shorter life expectancy and higher mortality rate (Phelan & Link, 2013).

In fact, Phelan and Link (2013) posited that SES is the fundamental cause of contemporary diseases that disproportionately effect historically marginalized groups. In their book chapter, they connect one's SES to access to vital resources, which in turn are predictive of health outcomes (Phelan & Link, 2013). Historically marginalized groups have reduced access to financial resources, social connections, knowledge, prestige, and power (Phelan & Link, 2013). This in turn reduces the likelihood of an individual living a healthy life due to interrelated factors, including reduced access to healthy foods, healthcare, and adequate housing. Link and Phelan (2013) argue that this reduced access due to discrimination and lower SES not only contributes to disease, but fundamentally causes disease to occur, disproportionately burdening lower SES individuals with worse health outcomes.

A contemporary and extremely clear example of this is the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human beings with minority identities. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021) report that "factors such as discrimination, neighborhood and physical environment, housing, occupation, education, income, and wealth gaps put some racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk" of exposure to, severe illness from, and mortality from COVID-19. Furthermore, people with non-white identities have significantly worse health outcomes regarding likeliness to contract disease, likeliness of hospitalization, increased incidences of disease contraction, and incidences of COVID-19 related mortality, ventilation, and death (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

While APA writing is typically intended devoid of emotion, I feel it necessary to assert that above descriptions of reduced health outcomes for historically marginalized groups is a

human rights travesty, nothing short of a pandemic that has existed for centuries longer than the COVID-19 pandemic.

Outside of significant health and mortality outcomes, identities are significantly related to psychological well-being. One example is the significant positive relationship between volunteer role identity, perceived time spent in role identities, and positive well-being outcomes. A 2012 study revealed that salient role identification with a volunteer role was significantly and positively related to self-reported life satisfaction, happiness, sense of mastery over life, and self-esteem (Thoits, 2012). This effect was mediated by meaning and purpose and life, which will be discussed in a later subsection. Furthermore, role identity was associated with belief in one's ability to achieve desired goals and positive reflected self-appraisals, which are related to self-esteem (Thoits, 2012).

The Essence of Identities

Through the exploration of identity in this literature review, it became clear that identities are dynamic, multiple in nature, and encompass how individuals see themselves and are seen by others. Both the ways an individual sees themselves and the ways that others see an individual are significantly related to health and well-being outcomes. From this understanding of identities, the exploration of related but differentiated self-related processes can be better understood. An additional process of self that is significantly related to mental health and well-being outcomes is self-concept clarity.

Self-Concept Clarity

Self-concept clarity is defined as "the extent to which self-beliefs are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and stable" (Carter & Bruene, 2019, p. 1). It is a dynamic variable that is measured over time. Simply put, self-concept clarity is the degree to which an individual perceives to understand themselves at a given moment in time. It is different than identity because it is related to the perception of clarity in understanding the self, rather than understanding the exact ways the person identifies or is identified. Since its conceptualization in 1986, researchers have demonstrated significant relationships between self-concept clarity and a variety of well-being outcomes (Carter & Bruene, 2019).

Research indicates that significant relationships exist between low self-concept clarity and higher incidence of both depressive disorders and suicide (Carter & Bruene, 2019). In addition, research has demonstrated significant relationships between self-concept clarity and self-esteem, rumination, and chronic self-analysis (Carter & Bruene, 2019).

Researchers also found self-concept clarity impacts women's body image, in that higher self-concept clarity led to lower levels of external comparison and lower levels of thin-ideal internalization (Carter & Bruene, 2019). Inversely, lower levels of self-concept clarity were associated with higher levels of external comparison, and higher levels of body dissatisfaction (Carter & Bruene, 2019). The implications of this research indicate that the greater clarity an individual perceives to have of themselves, the more resilient they may be in the face of maladaptive and harmful external messaging. In summation, self-concept clarity is related to a wide variety of mental health processes that affect well-being.

In addition to being related to well-being researchers have found that self-concept clarity is also significantly related to identities. Specifically, self-concept clarity is significantly related

to perceived identity change in the three categories of person, role, and social identities (Carter & Bruene, 2019).

As previously discussed, perceived identity change refers to how an individual's perceptions of their identities change over time (Carter & Bruene, 2019). There are two key aspects of perceived identity change: the first is magnitude, and the second is direction. Magnitude describes the degree of severity of the change, and direction describes the extent to which a change in identity is perceived to be regressive or progressive (Carter & Bruene, 2019). Researchers found that both magnitude and direction of the perceived identity change impacted self-concept clarity. They found that the greater the magnitude of negative identity change, the lower the self-concept clarity, but the more progressive an identity change is perceived to be, the greater the self-concept clarity (Carter & Bruene, 2019). This is salient because it demonstrates that both the magnitude and direction of perceived identity impact self-concept clarity, with its numerous mental health and well-being implications.

Research has demonstrated that self-concept clarity and perceived identity change are salient processes of self that help to inform how self is perceived and how those perceptions relate to well-being. Another relevant aspect of self-perception is meaning and purpose in life, which also relate to both identities and well-being outcomes.

Purpose and Meaning: Differentiation and Relation

While meaning and purpose in life are utilized interchangeably in colloquial language, they are viewed as distinct but related concepts in the literature. Purpose has been found to be related to identity formation, and identity formation in turn can strengthen purposeful commitments in life (Bronk, 2011). In other words, finding purpose was related to the

development of adolescent's social and ego identities (who they are in relation to the world and who they are over time), which then reinforces their commitment to their purpose (Bronk, 2011).

Kendal Cotton Bronk (2011) defined purpose as "an enduring, personally meaningful commitment to what one hopes to accomplish or work towards in life" (p. 32,). Bronk (2011) also indicated that there is increasing consensus that purpose includes three distinct elements. These elements of purpose are 1) a stable and generalized intention that leads to 2) meaningful accomplishment, and 3) productive engagement with the world beyond oneself (Bronk, 2011).

This definition of purpose includes intentional commitment to enacting behaviors related to creating the kind of world one desires to see and doing what one desires to do This involves both identification of a purposeful goal and the committed action to making it happen. In doing so, one engages with the outside world in way that is perceived to be both productive (as opposed to destructive) and meaningful.

The repetitious use of the word meaningful while defining purpose shows that deriving meaning is crucial to one's purpose in life. It also demonstrates that purpose and meaning are related but conceptually distinct. Purpose in life is related to commitment and action, while meaning in linked to perceptual processes (Bronk, 2011; Kashdan & Steger, 2007)

This indicates that meaning in life is derived from an individual's unique perceptions of what is meaningful and what is not (Bronk, 2011; Thoits, 2012). Thus, when researchers assess meaning in life, they rely on self-report measures (Kashdan & Steger, 2007; Thoits, 2012). While what an individual perceives to be meaningful may certainly be influenced by external influences such as salient others and cultural norms, it is ultimately the individuals' unique perception of meaning that contributes to a felt sense of purpose in life. Bronk (2011) concluded her study by

recommending purpose interventions in the lives of adolescents to help facilitate positive outcomes associated with both purpose and identity formation.

Purpose and Meaning: Relation to Well-Being

The importance of meaning and purpose in life is furthered by their relationship to salient well-being outcomes. For meaning and purpose to be positively to well-being, then they would be positively related with positive well-being outcomes, and negatively related to negative wellbeing outcomes.

Indeed, the literature demonstrates that when meaning and purpose in life are present, they are positively associated with an assortment of mental and physical well-being outcomes. Specifically, meaning and purpose in life was found to have a mediating relationship between role identity and self-reported life satisfaction, happiness, sense of mastery over life, and self-esteem (Thoits, 2012). Additionally, both purpose and identity formation were positively associated with adolescent academic achievement, and hope (Bronk, 2011; Burrow et al., 2010).

Conversely, research also indicates that meaning and purpose in life are negatively related to negative or maladaptive well-being outcomes. Specifically, meaning in life was found to have negative direct and indirect relationships to anxiety and depression (Rahiminezhad, Kazemi, Farahani, & Aghamohamadi, 2011). Lack of perceived meaning in life has also been found to be significantly related to suicidal tendencies (Edwards & Holden, 2001). In addition, one study found that perceived lack of purpose in life was related to increased substance abuse among women and increased suicidal thinking among men (Harlow & Newcomb, 1986).

Yet, despite relevance to well-being, there is a growing gap in youth that feel connected to their meaning and purpose in life (Bronk, 2011; Damon, 2008). In fact, a 2008 study by

William Damon, revealed that only 20 percent of the adolescents that participated developed a clear sense of meaning and purpose in life. This is an alarming trend, as it indicates a growing need to help youth find their meaning and purpose in life to help them connect to well-being. But how does one begin to find their meaning and purpose in life? There is evidence that curiosity can play a role in helping one derive meaning, purpose, and well-being.

Curiosity: Meaning, Purpose, and Well-Being

Curiosity has been defined "the positive emotional–motivational system oriented toward the recognition, pursuit, and self–regulation of novel and challenging information and experiences" (Kashdan & Roberts, 2004; Kashdan & Steger, 2007). A curious disposition, known as trait curiosity, is significantly related to well-being, and meaning in life (Kashdan & Steger, 2007). Curiosity helps facilitate an individual's engagement in growth behaviors, including spending more time with challenging stimuli. Researchers found that curiosity was highest when people spend time engaging with stimuli high novelty, challenge, and perceived self-competence (Kashdan & Steger, 2007). High perceived competence is a crucial component, because a novel and challenging situation with low perceived competence reduced the amount of time spent interacting with challenging stimuli (Silvia, 2005).

In addition to trait curiosity, researchers investigating the relationship between meaning in life and curiosity discovered that state curiosity in a day can positively impact well-being in individuals with high trait curiosity (Kashdan & Roberts, 2004). State curiosity, as differentiated from trait curiosity, is curiosity that is elicited by a given situation for a shorter period of time (Kashdan & Roberts, 2004). State curiosity and trait curiosity are theoretically similar but distinct constructs, as trait curious individuals are willing to experience state curiosity more

frequently, readily, and for longer durations of time (Kashdan & Roberts, 2004). The research design included a daily diary survey, where participants were asked to report the degree to which they felt state curiosity within a given day (Kashdan & Roberts, 2004). These reports were then correlated with a battery of well-being assessments.

For participants with higher trait curiosity, high self-reported state curiosity on a given day was related to frequent growth-oriented behaviors (Kashdan & Roberts, 2004). Thus, when high trait curiosity individuals experienced greater state curiosity, they exhibited growth behaviors that led to greater meaning and purpose in life through their personal growth (Kashdan & Roberts, 2004).

The Healing Power of Expressive Writing

After spending most of the subsections of this literature review exploring self, it is relevant to explore the body of literature regarding writing. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that writing is a powerful, transformative tool. Writing is theorized to be effective because it operates on many different levels of our being — cognitive, emotional, social, and biological (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). This flexibility allows writing to have profound effects on health and wellness. Stucky and Nobel (2010) report that "journal writing has been linked to creativity, spiritual awareness, and expansion of the self" through "meaning making… included helping others and using creative expression to describe and process… abuse" (p. 260).

Specifically, writing is a tool that can be effectively used to explore challenging emotions with incredible health benefits. A comprehensive metanalysis conducted by Stuckey and Nobel (2010) have concluded that "emotional writing can influence frequency of physician visits, immune function, stress hormones, blood pressure, and a number of social, academic, and cognitive variables" across cultures, age groups, and diverse backgrounds (p. 259).

While the accessibility and transformational nature of writing is encouraging, it is worth reiterating that identity is related to one's access and ability to utilize this tool due to literacy and SES. The National Institute of Literacy reports that, of the 19 percent of adults with the lowest literacy levels, 43 percent of them live in poverty, though the poverty rate was reported at only 11.8 percent in 2018 (Rea, 2020). This indicates that the impoverished are disproportionately illiterate when compared to wealthier populations.

On one hand, that a 2017 study conducted by the National Center for Education statistics found that 81 percent of U.S. adults were functionally literate. This indicates that writing is a plausible route for better health outcomes for over 80 percent of the population. The drawback is that this tool is still ineffective for 19 percent of the population, and of that 19 percent, many are impoverished individuals who have a greater need of the health benefits of writing. This indicates there is a need for creative thinking around the topic of accessibility of writing-based interventions to ensure the people who have the highest need can participate, in addition to equitable education reform.

Reflections and Future Directions

This literature review of research regarding the dynamic, non-linear processes of self, including self-concept clarity, identity, perceived identity change, curiosity, meaning, and purpose, revealed significant relationships with health, mental health, and well-being. In many ways, people that perceive to know their "self" and their meaning and purpose tend to experience more positive health and well-being outcomes, while those who perceive not to know their "self" tend to experience more negative health and well-being outcomes. These findings indicate that experiences that facilitate knowing oneself may be beneficial to well-being.

Additionally, the research demonstrates writing is an accessible and low-cost tool for helping improve health outcomes. While accessibility concerns exist and need to be addressed, this literature review provides support for the facilitative tool I am creating with this Master's Project, which deliberately combines the power of self-expression and self-discovery with the healing power of expressive writing.

This exploration of literature also led to a key understanding which helped clarify my personal experiences related to expressive writing, and why I've found expressive writing to be such a valuable and productive practice. Revisiting the phenomenon that I described in section one, I experienced lower well-being when I felt I did not know myself, and higher well-being when I felt that I did know myself. This is consistent with the research regarding self-concept clarity, with greater self-concept clarity being related to better well-being outcomes, and lesser self-concept clarity being related to lesser well-being outcomes. It even helps explain experiences I had in relation to depressive disorders and suicidal thinking, and why it has been so important for me to pursue my meaning and purpose in life.

Furthermore, the times in my life where I was using expressive writing, I felt that I knew myself better. The times in my life I did not use expressive writing, I felt that I knew myself worse. Therefore, I believe times in my life that I was expressive writing *led* to greater self-concept clarity and greater well-being outcomes, and the times in my life that I was not expressive writing *led* to lower self-concept clarity, and therefore lower well-being outcomes. This provides powerful, albeit anecdotal support that expressive writing can be a significant variable related to both self-concept clarity and well-being. As I continue to develop, operationalize, and eventually measure the efficacy of the *Freeing Writing* tool, this will be a promising variable to measure.

Finally, understanding research regarding the self reveals the ways that individuals experience better or worse health outcomes due to discrimination. This indicates a tremendous need for societal change as means of providing all human beings access to vital services that will positively transform their lives. This relates to housing, shelter, education, nourishment, healthcare access, equitable education, and literacy. In the interim, while it remains uncertain what changes will be made at a societal level, individuals and organizations can take steps to make health and well-being tools and facilitations more accessible to everyone.

In conclusion, the research explored throughout this literature review provides promising support for the creation of accessible tools and interventions that help individuals explore identities, self-concept clarity, meaning and purpose, and curiosity through writing to facilitate salient health and well-being outcomes. The development of this tool, as well as instructions for delivering and facilitating *Freeing Writing*, is explored in *Section Four: Outcomes*.

Interlude

Living Document
By: William O. Fogarty

I must be insane
for wanting to fit
invisible phenomena
into APA style pages,

to take the formless,
fundamental
is-ness
of the universe

and slap it around
with page breaks,
precision line spacing,
indents that hang,
words that cascade
matter of factly…

yet somehow here
the formless pervades
the white space of the page
that eyelids flutter over
without taking in—

to Alan Watts,
substance accentuates
the importance
of the invisible
living within all phenomena,
the fertile existence
beneath the stance…

and what exists beneath
this APA text
is neural connectivity
of zapping electrodes,
the whirring laptop fan,

and someone caring enough
to place into words

measurements taken
of the inexplicable.

Section Three: Process Plan

   The following process plan lists the steps that will be followed to achieve personal,

professional, and scholarly ambitions derived from the execution of this Master's Project. I also

acknowledge that complete realization of these ambitions stretches beyond the completion of the

semester. Thus, the subsequent project plan and evaluation plan comprise steps beyond the scope

of this Master's project.

Project Plan

Phase 1: Master's Project

Step 1: Conduct Literature Review of self, well-being, and writing

Step 2: Study Design Thinking

Step 3: Create and Deliver facilitative tool using Design Thinking

Step 4: Further Development of facilitative tool using Design Thinking

Phase 2: Beyond Master's Project

Step 5: Subsequent Delivery of facilitative tool

Step 6: Further Development of facilitative tool

Step 7: Creating Strategic Plan to facilitate tool regularly

Step 8: Creating Programming Schedule of well-being facilitations (including facilitative tool)

Step 9: Utilize Tool with businesses and in retreat spaces

Step 10: Follow the Energy, wherever it goes

Evaluation Plan

I should be evaluated on my ability to meet the goals that I set out for myself in Section One. As a reminder, these goals were:

- Effectively learn and apply Design Thinking as a project management framework

- Compile and synthesize scholarly sources in a cohesive literature review

- Create and deliver facilitative tool

- Develop and modify facilitative tool

The way to evaluate these goals seems to be straightforward, therefore my success can be assessed by answering the following questions:

- Was I able to effectively learn and apply Design Thinking?

- Did I compile a satisfactory literature review with proper formatting and relevant insights?

- Did I create and deliver the creative product that I set out to?

- Did I incorporate feedback to improve the tool based on the initial delivery?

The next Section, Outcomes, explores the degree to which I was successful in bullet points 1, 3, and 4, while bullet point 2 can be assessed by evaluating the literature review completed in *Section Two: Pertinent Literature or Resources*.

Section Four: Outcomes

In this section on outcomes, I provide an in-depth look at the creation, delivery, formatting, testing, development, and restructuring of the self-expression and self-discovery tool, *Freeing Writing*. This section will provide an in-depth view of the intention that shaped the creation of the tool, the creative product itself, the feedback received about its initial delivery, the future directions for the tool as it pertains to my future career goals, and ideas for making the tool as accessible as possible. It has been a heck of time finishing out my Master's Degree in the middle of a pandemic, so I am proud to deliver this to the readers that might be interested in using *Freeing Writing* as a way of improving their lives.

Project Management with Design Thinking

It was with tremendous foresight, or dare I say "Four-Sight", that my Master's Project advisor, Dr. Puccio, recommended I use Design Thinking (DT) to develop my creative product. Until that point, I was only peripherally aware of and mildly resentful of Design Thinking. This tepid resentment was related to the popularity that DT has enjoyed, with greater mainstream brand recognition than Creative Problem Solving as a result of its affiliation with the Stanford *D* school. I also knew that I had to study hard to understand DT as a framework and then utilize it for project management.

I began by reading the book, *Creative Confidence*, by Tom Kelley. It is through this reading, meaningful discussion with creativity colleagues and Dr. Puccio, and real-world project management experience developing *Freeing Writing* that I furthered my understanding of and

ability to apply DT. The learning and insights I acquired by doing so is discussed in *Section Five: Key Learnings*.

Freeing Writing Purpose: From Self-Expression to Self-Discovery

As discussed in *Section One: Background to the Project,* the creation and development of this Master's Project was guided, in part, by direct, personal experiences of the transformative power of self-expression and self-discovery. Living at the intersection of self-expression and self-discovery has consistently resulted in life-altering results for me. Now, at the beginning of the semester, I set out facilitate similar experiences for others, and in turn, equip them with these transformational tools.

Conducting the literature helped inform my perspective and prepared me to develop the tool. I now had scientific evidence supporting the use of writing to understand the self as a theoretically plausible way of facilitating transformative health and well-being experiences. I began to utilize contemplation, meditation, and visualization to guide the development of this tool.

Sitting in meditation helped clarify and pinpoint the intersection of my personal experiences, the research, and my creativity training. Element by element, the tool began to take shape. The first element would utilize divergent thinking and convergent thinking tools to generate and select questions to serve as writing prompts for the session. These user-created prompts would therefore be salient and meaningful to each unique individual. A second element would utilize the divergent thinking guidelines to enhance free writing. The combination of the first and second elements would serve to provoke honest, creative, and judgement-free written self-expression by protecting and honoring the participant's true feelings, desires, and beliefs.

The last element of the tool would incorporate deliberate reflection on the writing and the experience, thus completing the journey from self-expression to self-discovery, and eventually leading to greater self-understanding. Each of these crucial elements are explored in the subsequent subsections.

Freeing Writing Elements: Ask the Write Question

One of the reasons that I believe *Freeing Writing* enhances self-expression and self-discovery when compared to traditional free writing (as described in Pennebaker, 1997) is that it makes question asking an explicit rather than implicit part of the writing process. This element has thus been named "Ask the Write Question" to encourage the generation and selection of questions to serve as prompts that make the participant want to write and explore.

Writing, when examined meta-analytically, can be considered a form of response. Whether we are responding internal stimuli, such as the voices in our heads or the emotions in our bodies, or external stimuli, such as salient life events or even a writing prompt, there is a motivating force that compels us to express what's within us. I believe it is beneficial to make these motivating forces conscious rather than unconscious, and explicit rather than implicit. This can be done through deliberate question generation as a precursor to and enhancement of the expressive writing process.

I will use an example from my own life to help illuminate what I am describing here. When I was writing to express negative emotional states (as discussed in *Section One: Background to Project*), I was essentially expressing my answer to the question: what is happening inside me? Writing then took the invisible processes of my thinking and made them visible on the page. The answers that that I got to this question varied between direct and

indirect, tactile and symbolic, inspiring and depressing. However, they helped to clarify and answer that implicit question, and helped me to make meaningful changes to my thinking.

Even though "what is happening inside of me?" is a worthy question to explore, I acknowledge that there are many other questions that are meaningful and purposeful to me. Exploring questions such as "who am I?", "what do I want to do with my life?", and "what is my purpose?" have propelled me towards deeper layers of self-discovery. Conducting the literature review, however, helped reiterate the importance of each individual's unique perceptions of what is meaningful and purposeful. What I think is a meaningful question might not be what another person find's meaningful, and vice versa.

In CPS, there are two types of thinking which are separated from each other in order to enhance the creative process: divergent and convergent thinking (Puccio, Mance, & Murdock 2010). Divergent thinking is utilized to generate options, while convergent thinking is utilized to select options (Puccio, Mance, & Murdock 2010). Thus, using divergent and convergent thinking is an effective way of allowing each participant to generate and select meaningful and purposeful questions that are relevant to the aspects of themselves that they wish to explore. Once the participant has chosen a salient question to explore, self-expression and self-discovery will be enhanced because the question is assuredly and inherently meaningful to the participant. To further enhance the writing process, the second element is predicated upon deferment of judgement while writing.

Freeing Writing Elements: Judgement-Free Writing

In *Section One: Background to the Project,* I discussed the revolutionary power of removing judgement from the writing process by studying Italian Futurism. This allowed me to

access flow in the writing process, to write honestly and clearly, and to enjoy the process of creating. Thus, the second element is called Judgement-Free Writing, to encourage the participant to both let go of judgement and keep their hand moving during the writing process.

Rather than framing this element of the tool through the lens of Futurism, I chose to include the simpler and more direct language acquired during my studies of creativity. In short, using the divergent thinking guidelines of Creative Problem Solving (CPS) helps clearly and directly communicate the value of deferring judgement to enhance self-expression. To effectively utilize divergent thinking, participants temporarily suspend or defer judgement from the creative process to facilitate the conditions by which novel ideas, honest answers, and new thinking can be created (Puccio, Mance, & Murdock 2010). This is because premature judgement in a CPS session can inhibit new thinking, diminish the creative atmosphere, and prevent creative outcomes from being achieved (Puccio, Mance, & Murdock 2010).

According to Natalie Goldberg (2005), author of best-selling book *Writing Down The Bones,* judgement during writing can serve a similar function, hindering our ability to be honest, vulnerable, and transparent about our wants, needs, and desires. When our mind is clouded by judgement, then the state of the truth is often invisible.

Drawing upon a common meditation analogy, if our mind is a sky, judgement are clouds that obstruct the sun. The sun is always there, but we are temporarily unable to see it. Judgement or denial of the truth about oneself, what one wishes, desires, and believes, is like someone denying that the sun exists because all they've ever seen is clouds. Therefore, for writing to facilitate self-expression and self-discovery, the participant must be safe from judgement.

Freeing Writing then, is intended to be a liberating wind, which allows the clouds to withdraw and the truthful, illuminating sun to shine forth visibly and joyously. The divergent

thinking guidelines help effectively convey clearly and concisely precisely how we can suspend judgement from productive periods of free writing.

Free writing is a technique where the only objective of the exercise is to keep your hand moving, to continue writing for the duration of the time allotted. The benefits of this style of writing were found by Pennebaker (1997) to have significant mental and emotional health outcomes. I named the tool *Freeing Writing* because I believe that additional elements will enhance the already present benefits of free writing. The third element of *Freeing Writing* that is intended to do so is deliberate and meaningful reflection.

Freeing Writing Elements: Make it Meta

The previous elements, Ask the Write Question and Judgement-Free Writing are dedicated to optimizing the process of self-expression in an area of the participants life where self-discovery is desired. The third element, Make it Meta, encourages the participant to reflect on the experience of *Freeing Writing*, as well as the writing itself.

This is done by asking provocative reflection questions for the participant to begin to synthesize the experience they've just had. Questions are posed such as "What did it feel like to defer judgement? Were you able to? What did it feel like to write in this way? What did you learn about yourself or the world around you?"

The Make it Meta stage encourages reflection from any number of meta-levels. They have the option to review their writing and their learning from the content they created, to evaluate their relationship to the process itself, or to examine any insights into the nature of themselves or the universe. It is the final step of reflection that allows for meaningful self-discovery to be enhanced and integrated within the *Freeing Writing* Process.

As demonstrated in these subsections, the intention behind the elements of this tool is for the participant to experience a tremendous freedom. Within the *Freeing Writing* tool, you are free to create, select, and explore questions and prompts that are relevant and meaningful. You are free from judgement of yourself and others. You are free to explore your heart's desires, wishes, and truths. You are free to make meaning and purpose from the experience however you wish. *Freeing Writing* is designed to be as empowering and personally relevant as possible for each unique human being that participates.

Delivering *Freeing Writing* at Mini CEE 2021

After creating the basic elements of *Freeing Writing*, it was time to deliver a working prototype of the tool to an audience. A serendipitous moment arose as I was received an email asking for breakout programming for the 2021 Virtual Creativity Expert Exchange (CEE 2021). This was a tremendous opportunity to deliver the prototype while continuing to bolster my professional credentials. I sent in my application and was accepted as a facilitator lead a session titled: *Facilitating Meaning and Purpose in Life.*

One of the most valuable aspects of attending and presenting at CEE was also one of the greatest challenges: condensing *Freeing Writing* to the 20-minute window allotted at CEE 2021. On one hand, time constraints assisted the process of creating the prototype. I discovered that the *Freeing Writing* tool is like a liquid: it can take the shape of its container without losing its identity.

The time constraints also forced me to make some challenging decisions about how *Freeing Writing* would be delivered. I conducted an anticipatory audience analysis, concluding that I would be presenting for a highly educated, primarily scholarly audience. I then decided to

focus a substantial portion of my allotted time on the theoretical underpinnings of the tool, fearing it would not be taken seriously without an in depth look at the research. I would then use the second half of the time to deliver the tool. Some sacrifices were made to accommodate the ten-minute timeframe. The most regrettable of these sacrifices was the brevity of the Judgement-Free Writing element.

The weeks leading up to the facilitation held some significant personal challenges for me. I was simply proud of myself for showing up and giving it my all. I had successfully created a functional prototype and left the rest up to my higher power.

When the facilitation finally began, I was faced with an unanticipated situation. Only one participant joined the concurrent session. I was mildly disappointed, exacerbated by the anxiety of my personal circumstances, so I used mindful breathing to begin to calm my nervous system. As I watched creativity superstar Theresa Lawrence deliver a highly professional presentation for the audience of one, I repeated a gratitude mantra to help reframe my disappointment. I returned to a grounded baseline just as my turn to present arrived. I was delighted to see two or three late comers had joined. As I began delivering the tool, another person joined, offering an opportunity for more feedback and an additional challenge of inclusively facilitating to late comers on the fly.

Overall, I was satisfied with my initial delivery of the tool. I did the best I could, given the circumstances, and delivered a session that I was proud of. The delivery was highly imperfect, but I was able to let go of perfectionism with the help of Design Thinking. I reminded myself this was not the finished product, but simply the first opportunity to develop the tool into a more polished form for the next audience. The feedback that I got at the end of the delivery was positive, with one participant expressing gratitude for having had a container to explore the

question that his heart wanted to explore. I was also quite honored to have received praise from Dr. Roger Firestein, who was the designated faculty member in attendance. The initial *Freeing Writing* prototype that I delivered in this session, described below, may provide a succinct but valuable insight for the reader, and an opportunity to try the tool if so desired (which, in the spirit of experiential learning, is humbly recommended).

Preliminary *Freeing Writing* Prototype

The following prototype of the facilitative tool *Freeing Writing* was delivered at CEE 2021. The reader is encouraged to participate with the tool if they are curious. The reader may also use a longer time allotment if any of the steps feel too short or rushed, and particularly are encouraged to do step 2, Judgement-Free Write, for at least 5 minutes if possible.

Materials Needed:

- Writing utensil and paper or writing application

- Timer

- Instrumental Music, without words (optional but recommended)

Step 1) Ask the Write Questions

Step 1a) Use divergent thinking to generate questions that inspire writing

Objective: Diverging on Personally Meaningful Questions

Tool used: Individual Brainstorming

Prompt:

"Next we are going to begin generating provocative and interesting questions using divergent thinking. Don't forget to use the divergent thinking guidelines: defer judgement, go for

quantity, combine and build on ideas, and seek wild and unusual ideas. You do not need to use statement starters. The questions generated can be anything from why do I always lose my keys to what am I called to do on this earth? Now, let's begin.

Write as many questions as possible based on the following prompt: WMBAT questions my heart wants to explore?

Time allotted: 3 minutes

Outcome: Generate 10-20 provocative questions that participant wishes to explore through writing

Step 1b) Use convergent thinking to select questions that inspire writing

Objective: Converging on Personally Meaningful Questions

Tool used: Highlighting

Prompt:

"Next, we are going to focus on selecting the question your heart most wants to write about today. We are going to use a tool called intuitive highlighting to select the question that speaks to you most.

Consider the following questions to help you make your choice: What jumps out at you? What sparkles at you? What attracts you in your gut? What ones do you feel a burning desire to answer? What feels juicy?

Start by using a star or symbol to mark the top three questions you are interested in.

Once you've marked down three questions, ask yourself again, which question does my heart most wish to write about today? Pick whichever one stands out most to you. If you really can't choose, close your eyes, and pick one of the three at random. You can come back to the other ones later."

Time allotted: 1-2 minutes

Outcome: Selected a question to explore in Judgement-Free Write period

Step 2) Judgement-Free Write:

if the reader would like to participate, it is highly encouraged to put on some relaxing, wordless music to help facilitate the flow state while writing

Objective: Judgement-Free Write on selected question

Tool used: Free Writing and Divergent Thinking Guidelines

Prompt:

"Using the creative question that you selected, take 3.5 minutes to write down anything that comes up. Keep your hand moving for the whole time. Defer judgement, don't repress judgement!

If all that is coming to your head is judgement, write that down! If the voice in your head or heart is fearful, write that down! Just let it and get it all out.

If given the opportunity, go for the jugular: "If something comes up in your writing that is scary or naked, dive right into it. It probably has lots of energy" – (Natalie Goldberg, p. 9, 2005)

Time allotted: 3.5 minutes

Outcome: Self-express regarding the question the participant wished to explore

Step 3) Make it Meta

Objective: Reflecting on the experience or writing to facilitate self-discovery

Tool used: Reflection, Meditation, or Reflective Writing

Prompt:

"Take a few minutes to reflect (writing, meditating, or thinking) about any part of the experience that feels relevant:

- On your experience of the process (metanalytical)

- On your thinking throughout the process (metacognitive)

- On your feelings throughout the process (metaemotional)

- On any insights into the Divine nature of the universe (metaphysical)

- On any glimpses into your own divine nature (transpersonal)

- On any other meta-level you wish ☺

Some questions you might explore as you are reflecting: what happened as you explored the questions? What feelings came up? What are the implications of what you've written for your life? What did you learn? Did you learn anything about yourself, the universe, or the creative process?"

Time allotted: 2-3 minutes

Outcome: Beginning to synthesize and integrate self-discovery that arose through the process of self-expression

Step 4) Celebrate

Prompt: Congratulations on participating in the *Freeing Writing* process! Self-expression and self-discovery are both forms of radical self-care. Thank yourself and appreciate yourself for showing up in this way today. And finally, if you feel called to do so, repeat the following affirmations out loud:

I am Creative. I am Whole. I am Beautiful. I am Complete.

Incorporating Feedback

A day or two after the session ended, I knew I needed to get more feedback on the delivery of the tool to transform it into its next prototype. The next step I took was to find an additional 5 creativity practitioners to review the recorded session and provide constructive feedback. I sent the recording to these practitioners, and invited them to use the tool Plusses Potentials, Concerns, and Overcoming Concerns (PPCO) to help structure their feedback. The specific feedback that I got from the initial delivery of *Freeing Writing* as part of the presentation *Facilitating Meaning and Purpose in Life* at Mini CEE 2021 has been incredibly valuable.

Here are some of the most salient recommendations from the feedback:

- Place less emphasis on the theoretical background and research

- Simple explanations and analogies are as effective as more scholarly ones, so simplify the language significantly

- Allow more time for individuals to get "familiar" with their questions, to see which questions challenge them, which questions they wish to avoid, and which ones they feel ready and capable of answering

- Allow a much longer time for people to write

- Address up front that writing is confidential and will not be shared to help reduce self-consciousness and self-censorship

Personal Reflections

Outside of the feedback received from others, a final component of the development of a second prototype for *Freeing Writing* has been my own personal incubation, reflection, and vision for improving the project. The primary pain point with the first prototype of the delivery

was my desire to *always* make *Freeing Writing* relevant to meaning and purpose. Afterwards, I realized that I had been restricting the possibilities of how the tool could be delivered, as well as imposing constraints upon participants. This was the opposite of the intention of *Freeing Writing*, which is to allow a place for complete freedom for self-expression and self-discovery.

A key decision was made a result of this insight: to purposefully unpair the framing of *Freeing Writing* from *always* being related to meaning and purpose in life. The benefits of this choice are threefold. For starters, it reduces the amount of theoretical background that is needed to get participant buy in. This shortens the introduction to a few short slides about the benefits of creativity, self-expression, and writing. The second reason is that it broadens the scope of *Freeing Writing* significantly, from a meaning and purpose centered tool to an all-encompassing self-expression and self-discovery tool. The third reason I made this decision is that *Freeing Writing* can be used to generate questions for self-expression and self-discovery in a wide variety of personally meaningful contexts— that may indirectly relate to meaning and purpose in life.

For instance, if a person is having trouble with their romantic relationship, this is still an area of their life that is meaningful, important, and in need of some confidential exploration. Thus, generating questions to write about, engaging with the writing process, and reflecting on what they've learned from both the experience and content of the writing would be highly valuable for that individual. Furthermore, there are sometimes issues that stand in the way of pursuing an individual's meaning and purpose in life, such as depression, anxiety, fear of failure, or other forms of constraints. If a person wants to use *Freeing Writing* to explore these topics, it would be a shame if they felt like they were using the tool in the way that it wasn't intended because they didn't directly address meaning and purpose. Finally, the topical openness of

Freeing Writing provides opportunities to provide ongoing programming for participants to explore various aspects of their lives.

Thus, the second major change to *Freeing Writing* resulting from the first delivery is to create a suggested theme or topic for each Freeing Writing session. The benefit of creating a suggested topic is that it can provide suggestions and structure for an individual that wants guidance but can remain personally empowering to the participant that prefers to choose the area most relevant to their lives. This is the power of human centered design: rather than dictating to the participant what they must do, you instead allow the participant to co-create their own experience that best serves them.

This also offers flexibility for ongoing programming. Each time the participant returns to a *Free Writing* Session, they have an optional topic that can direct their thinking in novel ways or be completely ignored to focus on whatever they choose to explore. These revisions help strengthen and align *Freeing Writing* with its intended purpose: to facilitate self-discovery through self-expression in a freeing and empowering way.

Developing Version 2.0 for Institute for Myanmar United

The feedback that I was given after delivering *Freeing Writing* for the first time and my personal reflections have improved the initial design in preparation for a second delivery. This second prototype is significantly longer, it explicitly addresses the confidentiality of the writing, spends less time on research, and allows more time for participants to experience, generate, converge, write, contemplate, share, and reflect more freely. This second prototype of the tool also furthers my personal and professional goals of facilitating self-expression and self-discovery for others, by partnering with the organization Institute for Myanmar United (IMU).

IMU is an organization that was co-founded by Center for Applied Imagination faculty member Dr. John Cabra to facilitate service-learning trips to Myanmar for Buffalo State students. At the time that I am writing this, there has been a shocking military coup within the country. Having lost access to community partners on the ground there, the organization has pivoted to serve domestic Burmese refugee populations as they cope with the severe psychological, emotional, and physiological consequences of the coup. It is IMU's mission to bring health and wellness through creative expression as a form of constructive coping.

Having partnered with IMU since 2019 and been previously scheduled to attend the service-learning trip before the Covid-19 Pandemic, it is my goal to help the organization pivot and serve the domestic Burmese population. In doing so, I have been able to develop *Freeing Writing* as a health and wellness offering delivered in partnership with IMU. I am honored to have this opportunity to deliver the tool in a novel, meaningful, and useful way. After delivering this second prototype of *Freeing Writing,* more feedback to be collected to help further develop a third prototype.

Second Prototype Outline

- Welcome and Icebreaker (5 minutes)

- Introduction to IMU, mission, context, and team (10 minutes)

- Introducing *Freeing Writing* and research*:* (5 minutes)

- Ask the Write questions: (15 total minutes)

- Free Writing: (10 minutes)

- Make it Meta: analyzing (5 minutes)

- Break Out Rooms: (16 minutes)

- Make it Meta: synthesizing (4 minutes)

- Group sharing: (10-15 minutes)

- Staying Connected: (2 minutes

- Closing Meditation: (3 minutes)

- Approximate time: 1.5 hours

Brainstorming *Freeing Writing* Accessibility

As discussed in previous *Section Two: Pertinent Literature or Resources*, there are significant challenges related to accessibility of writing-based interventions for communities in need. This especially true since systemic discrimination and oppression lead to inequitable distribution of resources that disproportionately effect minority individuals. Thus, I have conducted an initial brainstorming session combined with intuitive highlighting based on the creative question, "what might be all the ways to make *Freeing Writing* accessible?".

- Visual art creation instead of writing

- Recording speaking

- Dictating to voice to text software

- Dictating to a volunteer

- Freestyle Poetry or Rap

- Creating a video on phone

- Telling a story to a partner and having it repeated back to them

- Recording Zoom breakout rooms

- Non-recorded partner sharing

- Singing

- Caption and Subtitle *Freeing Writing* recordings

- Include ASL translations

While it remains to be seen how these ideas will be implemented, these ideas also provide future directions for the development of related tools that can supplement *Freeing Writing* to deliver meaningful wellness experiences equitably. Future research is needed to inform any of these ideas before they come to fruition.

Section Five: Key Learnings

This semester has been transformational, allowing me to blossom as a facilitator and experience designer, and helping bring me closer to personal and professional goals. Along the way, my learning has been immense. I have experienced numerous applied learnings from creating, delivering, and revising *Freeing Writing*, the conceptual and applied understandings of Design Thinking, and moments of personal growth in overcoming perfectionism and fear of failure. Each of these learnings will help me progress as a well-rounded creative person, as well as a scholar, a professional, and human being.

Design Thinking: Perpetual Prototypes

One of the benefits of my Master's Project is that it drastically improved my understanding of the Design Thinking (DT) creative process. I moved from understanding the process vaguely to applying it practically. I will now discuss some of strengths of using DT, and how it benefitted me over the course of the semester.

One of the strengths of DT as a process is that it emphasizes the spirit of continuous development that has inspired human advancement throughout the ages. Through the DT lens, no invention is ever a truly "finished product". The product or invention that is being developed is perpetually considered a prototype (Kelley & Kelley, 2015). This reflects natural human ingenuity, for even if a product is millennia old, humans continue to find creative and innovative ways to improve it. This perspective of continuous prototyping significantly assisted my ability to create, test, and incorporate feedback throughout the course of this project. Specifically, viewing *Freeing Writing* as a perpetual prototype helped alleviate the pressure to design it

"perfectly" the first time. From a relaxed and grounded place emotionally and mentally, I was able to effectively execute my project plan without falling into paralyzing procrastination.

The lens of perpetual prototypes has also altered my worldview. I now look at quotidian products differently. The wheel is such a commonplace product in our lives that many completely take it for granted, but the more that I think about it from the DT perspective, the more the wheels on my car become miraculous.

It is strange to realize that manufacturers of wheels have utilized the spirit of DT for millennia and continue to this day. Even though the wheel as a product predates human records, modern manifestations of the wheel continue to be prototyped. Manufacturers work tirelessly to help wheels become stronger, more durable, and sometimes more sustainable. It is astounding to think of the seemingly endless prototypical iterations of the wheel in its long and illustrious history. It has existed in stone, wood, metal, and rubber forms. It has also existed as a complementary feature in a wide variety of other products, from wheelbarrows and carts to luxury automobiles and airplanes, and even on beds, tables, and chairs. Each iteration along the way represents a creative, prototypical application that has expanded the value of the wheel in our lives. It has also stretched our understanding of what a wheel is and our imagination of what a wheel might be. Yet, even the most innovative modern prototypes of the wheel were built upon the shoulders of that initial creative spark — someone finally creating a different way of moving.

Design Thinking: Human, User-Centered Design

The wheel's consistent and unrelenting use throughout history is directly related to its ability to meet the needs of humans that rely on it. This makes it easy to understand how DT adopts the perspective of Human Centered Design. Tom Kelley (creator of DT) and his brother

Dan Kelley (2015) remind designers that empathy is an essential aspect of creating and developing products for other human beings. In other words, the focal point of the DT process is the anticipated user, not the designer. This was another important perspective to adopt as I began to implement my DT project.

The first three steps of the DT Process—*Empathize*, *Define*, and *Ideate*—are all critical steps in identifying and meeting needs of other human beings (Kelley & Kelley, 2015). It is explicitly clear that these three stages place the user's need first. The designer is instructed to use *Empathize* to deeply understand the what the user is asking for, *Define* to clearly delineate the user's needs, and *Ideate* to generate ideas to meet this user's needs most effectively (Kelley & Kelley, 2015). Thus, DT is a process that requires both research and deliberate imagination. Deliberate imagination assists in empathizing with, defining the needs of, and creating ideas for the user. Research helps to clarify what the user is experiencing (empathizing), understand what the user is asking for by understanding their needs (defining), and learning from best practices for how to meet their needs (ideation).

Design Thinking: Failing Fast and Incorporating Feedback

The final steps of the DT process—*Prototype* and *Test*—are bolstered by internal and external atmospheres where failure is not only tolerated but expected and encouraged (Kelley & Kelley, 2015). This is the failing fast perspective of DT. As previously mentioned, *Prototype* reduces the pressure on the designer to get it right the first time. Because everything can be seen as a prototype, it becomes clear that any failure will be used to improve the subsequent prototype. With this reduced pressure, designers are more comfortably able to *Test* their prototype, knowing that any outcome will provide meaningful feedback. In this way, DT is

amplified by the designer's ability to tolerate failure and external climates that encourage failure as a means of strengthening and improving creative products and solutions.

The *Prototype* and *Test* stages are also assisted by an attitude of user-centered design (Kelley & Kelley, 2015). *Test* is of vital importance to the spirit of continuous improvement. After four steps of hypothetically working towards delivering the user a product or solution to meet their needs, the designer is finally able to measure their progress. This stage provides the meaningful feedback by which the subsequent prototype can be improved for the user.

In summation, successful human designers have been doing these steps for thousands of years. The language of DT helps makes the process simple and accessible. By embracing failure, centering user needs, and perpetually prototyping, Design Thinking helped transform my Master's Project into the product that you see before you. Besides the professional development, however, DT also provided tremendous relief from challenging personal patterns.

Overcoming Perfectionism and Fear of Failure

This Master's Project has helped me address some of my life's significant challenges by helping me learn to work in a manner not dictated by perfectionism and fear of failure. These fear-based internal processes had often left me feeling inhibited, disempowered, and helpless when faced with a task of creating, developing, and implementing my dreams. Design Thinking has provided a very liberating framework for me to work with.

Some of the shifts that I have experienced in the creation of *Freeing Writing* have made this project very different from previous projects. I was able to develop the tool to a prototypical level and test it without worrying about making it perfect. The expectation that what I developed is not and will never be perfect, allowed me to move forward at a consistent pace. I was also able

to focus on the experience of the participant rather than my own thoughts, judgements, and opinions. By focusing on the feedback of participants after the first delivery, I was able to take the pressure off myself to preemptively anticipate what is most beneficial to them. Instead, I could test out a prototype and get direct feedback regarding what worked and what didn't.

      In summation, the learning that I acquired over the semester permeated my personal and professional life. I am so grateful for this transformative opportunity.

Section Six: Conclusion

Final Reflection:

My thirst to know myself has persisted throughout my life. It has helped me navigate challenging mental health circumstances and survive to tell the tale. It also helped shape the course of my Master's Project, which I firmly believe will help fulfill my unique meaning and purpose on this planet. It is hard for me imagine a richer, more fulfilling life than one that assists others in self-expression and self-discovery. Developing *Freeing Writing* is a significant step towards making that dream a reality.

The importance of the role this program, the Creativity and Change Leadership Department at SUNY Buffalo State, has played in that process cannot be understated. In two short years, it has already helped my dreams come true. I find myself feeling indebted in a way that I soon hope to repay (and no, I'm not talking about my student loans). I feel indebted to an environment, climate, and staff of people that encouraged me to discover and pursue the longings of my heart. The mission of my life then, is to pay it forward — to help others express themselves, know themselves, follow their dreams, and feel supported in doing so.

What a ride it has been for me — both this semester and this life. There were times it seemed that despair would win out… and yet the ingenuity of the human spirit amazes me. The connections I have made, the things that I have learned, the tears I have cried, and anxiety and fear that has torn right through me — all of it feels worth it as I stand here at the precipice of an old chapter closing, and a new chapter opening.

Where life is taking me next, I cannot know for certain. But what I do know for certain is that I am held, I am loved, I am supported, and I am on the right path. From this place of love

and gratitude, whatever will be, will be. Please enjoy my poem below as a tribute to this journey

and thank you so much for journeying with me. Amen, and Sat Nam.

Master's Voyage
By: William O. Fogarty

Setting off now,
port in the rearview mirror;
storms may be sudden,
seas may be rocky,
life may be transient,
some things remain
longer than others;
but this project
in this archive
surpasses my
longevity;

and before
we know –
it's gone …

References

Acar, S., Tadik, H., Myers, D., Van der Sman, C., & Uysal, R. (2020). Creativity and Well-being: A Meta-analysis. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*.

American Psychological Association. (2021). Socioeconomic Status. Retrieved from https://www.apa.org/topics/socioeconomic-status

Appiah, K. A. (2018). *The lies that bind: Rethinking identity*. Profile Books.

Bronk, K. C. (2011). The role of purpose in life in healthy identity formation: A grounded model. *New directions for youth development*, *2011*, 31-44.

Burrow, A. L., O'dell, A. C., & Hill, P. L. (2010). Profiles of a developmental asset: Youth purpose as a context for hope and well-being. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *39*(11), 1265-1273.

Carter, M. & Bruene, S. (2019). Examining the relationship between self-perceptions of personal, role, and social identify change and self-concept clarity. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality: Consciousness in Theory Research and Clinical Practice, 38,* 425-451.

Crawford, M. (2006). *Transformations: Women, gender and psychology*. McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). COVID-19 Racial and Ethnic Disparities. Retrieved December 20, 2020, from https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/racial-ethnic-disparities/index.html

Cote, J. E., & Levine, C. (1987). A formulation of Erikson's theory of ego identity formation. *Developmental review*, *7*, 273-325.

Damon, W. (2008). The path to purpose: Helping our children find their calling in life. Simon and Schuster.

Edwards, M. J., & Holden, R. R. (2001). Coping, meaning in life, and suicidal manifestations: Examining gender differences. *Journal of clinical psychology*, *57*(12), 1517-1534.

Ferriss, T. (2017, April). Why you should define your fears instead of your goals. Retrieved July 12, 2019, from https://www.ted.com/talks/tim_ferriss_why_you_should_define_your_fears_instead_of_your_goals?language=en

Goldberg, N. (2005). *Writing down the bones: Freeing the writer within*. Shambhala Publications.

Harlow, L. L., Newcomb, M. D., & Bentler, P. M. (1986). Depression, self-derogation, substance use, and suicide ideation: Lack of purpose in life as a mediational factor. *Journal of clinical psychology*, *42*(1), 5-21.

Kashdan, T. B., & Steger, M. F. (2007). Curiosity and pathways to well-being and meaning in life: Traits, states, and everyday behaviors. *Motivation and Emotion, 31*, 159-173.

Kashdan, T. B., & Roberts, J. E. (2004). Trait and state curiosity in the genesis of intimacy: Differentiation from related constructs. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 23*, 792-816.

Kelley, T., & Kelley, D. (2015). *Creative confidence: Unleashing the creative potential within us all*. London: William Collins.

La Guardia, J. (2009). Developing who I am: A self-determination theory approach to the establishment of healthy identities. *Educational Psychologist*, *44*, 90–104.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *Fast Facts: Adult Literacy*. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=69.

Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). Writing about emotional experiences as a therapeutic process. *Psychological science*, *8*(3), 162-166.

Phelan, J. C., & Link, B. G. (2013). Fundamental cause theory. In *Medical sociology on the move* (pp. 105-125). Springer, Dordrecht.

Puccio, G. J., Mance, M., & Murdock, M. C. (2010). *Creative leadership: Skills that drive change*. Sage Publications.

Rahiminezhad, A., Kazemi, Z., Farahani, H. A., & Aghamohamadi, S. (2011). Purpose in life and identity dimensions as predictors of maladaptive psychological aspects: a path analysis study. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 30,* 1009-1013.

Rea, A. (2020, April 04). How Serious is America's Literacy Problem? Retrieved from https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=How-Serious-Is-Americas-Literacy-Problem#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20National%20Center,the%20illiterate%2Ffunctionally%20illiterate%20category.&text=Non%2DU.S.%2Dborn%20adults%20make,low%20literacy%2Filliterate%20U.S.%20population.

Silvia, P. J. (2005). What is interesting? Exploring the appraisal structure of interest. *Emotion, 5,* 89–102.

Sokol, J. T. (2009). Identity development throughout the lifetime: An examination of Eriksonian theory. *Graduate journal of counseling psychology*, *1*, 14.
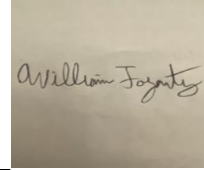
Stuckey, H. L., & Nobel, J. (2010). The connection between art, healing, and public health: A review of current literature. *American journal of public health, 100*, 254-263.

Thoits, P. A. (2012). Role-identity salience, purpose and meaning in life, and well-being among volunteers. *Social psychology quarterly*, *75*, 360-384.

Torrance, E. P. (1979). *The Search for Satori & Creativity*. Buffalo, NY: Creative Education Foundation.

Permission to place this Project in the Digital Commons online

I hereby grant permission to the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State college permission to place a digital copy of this Master's Project, Developing the Facilitative Health and Well-being Tool: *Freeing Writing*, as an online resource.

_____
Name

_____05/13/2021_____
Date