

12-2016

The People Who Influence Our Lives

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California State University, Monterey Bay

The People Who Influence Our Lives



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Julie R. Agrimson

Senior Capstone

Pre-Law Concentration

Research Essay/ Analysis Essay

Qun Wang

Division of Humanities and Communication

Fall 2016

Acknowledgements

This work would not have been completed without the knowledge and shared intelligence of my professors at California State University, Monterey Bay. Each professor I've had, has helped me develop my skills in ways I didn't even know possible and have been undeniably supportive of my career goals actively providing me with the academic's I need in order to reach those goals.

No one has been more important to me during the pursuit of this project than my beloved family and friends. I would like to thank them for their advice and guidance that is with me in whatever I pursue; they are the ultimate role models.

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Senior Project Proposal

1. *Name and Area of Concentration:*

Julie Agrimson

Pre-Law

2. *Essay Title:*

The People Who Influence Our Lives

3. *Topic:*

How our courage, when challenged by tough situations, is influenced by those around us. Our greatest courage and self-identities come through the strength of others.

4. *Research Question:*

How do the books *1984* by George Orwell and *In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julie Alvarez give an explanation of finding courage in others when under the influence of such tyrannical powers? And how does this relate to self-identity? What can this tell us about our social interconnectedness?

5. *Alignment with Common Theme:*

One's own self identity is immensely influenced by others. Self-identity isn't completely inherent since birth, it is learned and understood through others and throughout time. Our self-identity isn't made possible without the identities of others and those whom help us discover our own identities, especially at the most vulnerable and helpless times in our lives. In those moments when we feel most helpless, we often times question our identity and the people that we truly are. Our real identity becomes put to the test. This is what I will be proving through my research paper using the two books listed above.

6. Sources:

As of right now the two sources that I intend to use are *1984* by George Orwell and *In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez. Any other sources that I will use will be scholarly articles and literary criticisms from databases.

7. Next Steps:

Once my proposal is reviewed I will start by reading and annotating the two novels. I will pick out quotes and text that I will use in my paper to support my thesis. Then I will compile my paper together using all the information I have found and edit it. Finally, once I am happy with the essay I will prepare it for submission.

8. Timeline:

I am allowing myself three weeks to read and annotate the two books. So that gives me until October 15th to finish reading the books. After that I will begin by researching outside scholarly articles on the two books to find evidence to back up my thesis. I will give myself one week to do this, so until October 22nd. Next, I will begin the writing process of organizing an outline and choosing a thesis. Then I will write my paper and have a rough draft completed by November 5th. Within the next few weeks following that I will edit the paper and make any final proofs or revisions to make it error free. This I will have done by November 12th. In the next few weeks I'm going to gather everything I need for the presentation and submission of my final essay. I think that this is a completely doable schedule for completing my capstone.

Research Essay

In every person's life there are struggles and hardships to overcome, but no matter how challenging a problem may be, the people that one surrounds one's self with can make all the difference to a successful or unsuccessful outcome. The people who we choose to associate with have a strong influence on the choices we make and how we go about solving issues that appear in our day-to-day lives. When we surround ourselves with people who have similar values and aspirations as we do, they can easily give us the courage we need to make a change in the world even in the smallest way. Moreover, self-identification and self-realization doesn't derive from the self, alone, even though it may seem so. Understanding ourselves, and who we were meant to be, can only happen through our affiliations with others. In the novels *In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julie Alvarez, and *1984* by George Orwell, the characters face similar challenges and provide a way to see how our relationships can have a profound impact on how we go about overcoming those challenges.

Both Orwell and Alvarez lived in a time period under control of two major tyrannical powers, and the characters' relationships in the novels reflect their own personal hatred for these oppressive powers. The totalitarianism imposed by Stalin and by Trujillo impacted the philosophies of Orwell and Alvarez respectively. In *1984*, Orwell demonstrates his fear and animosity towards communism under the power of Stalin through the relationship between Winston and Julia, and even Winston's relationship with his wife, Katherine. Julia gives Winston a new foundation and direction because she is capable of giving him the courage he needs

to rebel after he has been adhered to his wife Katherine for so long. Katherine is extremely loyal to the Party and Winston hates the Party.

In Alvarez's novel she portrays the distress and animosity of living under the power of Trujillo and the regime, through the relationships between Minerva and Lio, as well as Minerva and Manolo. Lio begins to alter Minerva's opinion by giving her a whole new vision of how to live her life in opposition to Trujillo. Minerva has a natural born desire for rebellion so this encouragement is exactly what she needs after living so long with her family who want nothing but a pleasant, studious young daughter. Manolo later on becomes Minerva's partner in rebelling against the regime. While Winston's relationship with Katherine hinders his rebellion and Minerva's relationship with Lio does the exact opposite, both Winston and Minerva are given hope in their own personal rebellions because of their romantic relationships with Julia and Manolo. Winston and Minerva acquire a newfound strength, which ultimately inflames their natural desire to revolt.

Furthermore, this paper will examine the relationships that are formed in these novels, and by doing so, will show how Alvarez and Orwell emphasize how crucial human connections are in overcoming and facing despair, abuse, and loneliness, when combined with the individual courage to fight against the powers that hinder one's true happiness. In addition, it will ultimately illustrate and prove how our own personal self-identity's can be altered by those whom we surround ourselves by, for better, or for worse.

The challenges for Minerva and Winston are transformed into aspirations thanks to their relationships. For Minerva, her family doesn't want her involved in

the rebellion against the regime in any way. Her mother thinks it will be dangerous and will eventually get all of the family in trouble, for she is worried about the well-being of her children. Lio especially is someone Minerva's mother does not want her involved with. Alvarez exclaims, "For after finding out who Lio was exactly, Mama had forbidden Minerva to bring him into the house" (Alvarez 75). This reveals some of Mama's concerns and fears because she knows that even letting a man like Lio into the house could easily put their whole family in danger. Mama would much rather have Minerva go to school or possibly even do something in the religious life. Her sister Dede realizes this as well, and emphasizes that if Minerva is "an enemy of state" then "she would no doubt be an enemy of the state as well" (Alvarez 75). If Minerva becomes an enemy then the rest of the family would as well just because of their relation to her and Lio. Minerva's whole family is reluctant about the relationship between Minerva and Lio due to the risks involved, and Minerva is bold enough to put this aside for her ambitions. Through all of this, Minerva remains attracted to Lio especially because he is brave enough to rebel and this is what Minerva aspires to be like. As Oliver reveals, "Lio alters Minerva in a way to make her so passionate about fighting against the power that is holding everyone down, and this passion for the revolution carries on with her as well." Lio has a way of altering Minerva to make her more determined about the rebellion in a way no one else has. With Minerva being repressed by her family for quite some time now, she is willing to accompany Lio on their journey to clash against the threat the regime holds. Minerva's rebellion is clear after she attends one of Trujillo's parties with her father and sisters, Patria and Dede, when suddenly Trujillo asks Minerva to dance.

While they are dancing Minerva becomes quite uncomfortable and irritated with Trujillo and she shoves “just a little against him so he’ll loosen his hold, but he pulls [Minerva] tighter towards him. [Minerva] feels [her] blood burning [her] anger mounting” (Alvarez 100). Minerva is clearly denying Trujillo of his demand for her and in doing this, revolting against him. By this small action we can see how Lio has influenced her own beliefs, and her annoyance suggests her repugnance at the regime.

Winton’s obstacles lie within his wife Katherine, who ultimately gives him no sense of hope that is until he meets Julia, when his hopes are anew. Katherine embodies exactly what Winston is trying to escape from. She observes ideals and guidelines held by the Party and never dares to break any of the rules. Winston even mentions how she would rat out her own husband and would have “denounced him to the Thought Police if she had not happened to be stupid to detect the unorthodoxy of his opinions” (Orwell 111). Katherine will go so far as to divulge Winston to make sure that she is abiding by the regulations of the Party. Winston hates this about Katherine and also feels trapped in the relationship with her when they clearly share none of the same views about the Party. Katherine refuses to engage in any sexual act with Winston due to her dedication to the Party. As soon as Winston tries to have sex with her, he automatically feels “the stiffening of Katherine’s body . . . in which she still seemed to be pushing him from her with all her strength” (Orwell 110). Winston cannot even touch her without her closing off and even shoving away from him. Katherine believes, just like the Party, that the only reason for sex is procreation and nothing more. This situation makes Winston

very doleful as he sees Katherine as “a painful memory and . . . merely a distasteful one” (Orwell 110). Katherine’s coldness has brought Winston to loathe her, so he doesn’t remember her in a positive light, suggesting Winston’s growing desire to revolt against the Party. Winston undoubtedly desires rebellion in the form of sex, and this is why Julia is a new way out for him. The first time Julia and Winston have sex it is “a blow struck against the Party . . . a political act” (Orwell 105) and means nothing more than an act of rebellion. This affirms the reasoning behind their sex act was merely to have sex and feel the revolt happening in such an authentic and concrete manner, rather than do it with a means of love and connection. Winston looks up to Julia and “to find sexually decadent Julia, a woman who adores sex and who is a member of the Party, and who is capable of corrupting others within the Party, exceeds Winston’s wildest dreams. Now, Winston can begin to believe that the Party might truly be destroyed” (Parascandola). Winston is excited by Julia’s sexual promiscuity, something that could never be said of Katherine. Julia is everything that Katherine is not, and brings inspiration to him in his own exclusive rebellion because she is a breath of fresh air and loves to break rules of the Party. Though Winston’s idea that the Party could be overthrown is quite naïve, he is able to find a mental escape from the systemic rules of the Party in his relationship with Julia.

Developments and transformations with both of the relationships in the novels can be revealed through their gradually building affection for each other. Minerva is with Lio until he decides to go on a different venture to find asylum out of the country and continue his own rebellion. However, soon thereafter Minerva

meets Manolo who becomes her partner in crime and their relationship grows tremendously based on their same propensity for a revolution. Manolo supports Minerva's beliefs and her thoughts on Trujillo and the regime. The two of them are even helping in the national underground because "revolutionary struggle [is] the focus of Minerva's and Manolo's lives" (Vega). The revolution is portrayed as the main focus of their relationship and this asserts that they are truly in this relationship not only as lovers, but also as two people who want the same thing for their country, which ultimately is freedom. Everything they do is centered on rebelling. For example, they live in Monte Cristi to better assist the revolution "in a little nothing house . . . in that godforsaken town" (Alvarez 148). Clearly, the town is an undesirable place to live and though this is true, Minerva and Manolo still conclude that living here will amplify their personal rebellions. Later in the novel, their relationship develops in ways beyond a focus on rebellion. Minerva and Manolo have a growing family to take care of with their one daughter, Minou and one son, Manolito. Towards the end of the book Minerva mentions, "I couldn't think of anything I wanted more than to stay home with my sisters at Mama's, raising our children" (Alvarez 257). The rebellion is obviously very important to her, but so are her children and her growing family. Her values are a reminder that Minerva is still a human being and means more to her than just her concerns with the revolution. Minerva also loves her husband Manolo very much. When she goes to visit him in jail she comments, "his grip tightened until my hands felt numb, but I would never tell him to go" (Alvarez 267). Through this act alone it becomes evident that the two of them are going to be there for one another even in the hardest times. They will

stand by each other's side and as Minerva said will "never tell him to go," evidence that they truly are in love (267).

For Winston and Julia the change in their relationship is a bit different. Winston at first hates Julia; he is almost disgusted with her and thinks she may be part of the Party. However, this changes after they find a way to meet one another discreetly. Their first encounter in the novel appears when Julia is acting as though she is hurt and needs some help. At this point Winston doesn't want to help her and refers to her as "an enemy who [is] trying to kill him" (Orwell 88). Winston is worried that when she is acting this out, it's because she is actually trying to hurt or kill him, and at this point really wants nothing to do with her. Little does he know in this moment, she is acting vulnerable so that she could slip him a note that says she loves him. The note Winston receives from Julia is especially profound because by doing this Julia is inviting him to disobey and go against the Party. In this note she really wants to get together with Winston and have sex. A few days after he accepts the note from her, he himself realizes "only five nights ago [I] had contemplated smashing her skull in with a cobblestone; but that was of no importance" (Orwell 91-92). Winston is scared of her at first, thinking she may be an agent of the Party; however, his fear vaporizes when he realizes that the note is meant for physical pleasure. It is evident that Winston gains courage after he mentions that it was no longer important how he once hated her. Ultimately, Julia and Winston have sex as a secret way to subvert the Party's wishes.

One of the main goals of the Party is "to kill the sex instinct" and Winston illustrates "if he could not be killed, then to distort it and dirty it" (Orwell 57). In this

section of the novel Julia gives him the unfamiliar faith that there is indeed a way to rebel without actually rebelling against the Party face to face. This is exactly what Julia and Winston are trying to do. Their way of revolting against the Party is to find a way in which they can feel they have some sort of control and power of their own. This is the fundamental reason they exchange in this sexual act. Winston says outright, "Their embrace had been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party, it was a political act" (Orwell 105). At this point the only reason they are having sex is simply to destroy the Party in their own minds and to restore their humanity. The Party is cruel and degrades their sense of dignity for the human person. Actually, they are trying to regain this back, by disputing against the Party, by engaging in an act that is forbidden by means of love. People are only allowed to have sex as a means of procreation and this is what Winston and Julia are trying to escape from. Their sexual act begins as merely a means of dissent. However, as the novel continues, their relationship develops into actual feelings of love and romanticism towards one another. During the time Winston and Julia spend in Mr. Charrington's room, they act almost as though they are married and in a sense, playing "house." Julia comes in with food and makes some coffee. They lay together in bed and refer to one another as "dear" as if they were actually a married couple. Their relationship has grown tremendously into an "intensely physical love relationship" (Gardner 117) where they begin to see each other as man and wife. Winston even begins to see Julia as his wife and wonders about the possibility of it actually happening. Subsequently, he truly yearns for her love forever. Winston asserts, "[I] wished that [we] were a married couple of ten years' standing. [I]

wished that [I] was walking through the streets with her . . . but openly and without fear” (Orwell 116). Clearly, Winston looks at her in a devoted way and certainly doesn’t carry feelings of animosity for her anymore. There is a gradual building of affection that has happened over time, and now Winston wants to have her as more than just a partner to rebel with in a sexual fashion. He has gained true feelings for her after she has given him some bravery and after they have spent so much time together rebelling in their common cause.

By the end of both of the novels, the relationships sequentially have a major impact on both Winston and Minerva. Even when Minerva is without Manolo’s presence she continues the struggle against Trujillo locked up in a jail cell. Minerva is in jail for a while and at any chance she gets she seems fearless to go against any of the guards or supporters of the regime. At one point Maria Teresa and Minerva are let out of jail and driven down to the courthouse to have a trial. However, this trial is unfair because there is no one there to represent the two girls. The judge says that if it happens one more time Minerva will have a five year sentence and an increased fine for the both of them. After hearing this “Minerva just [throws] her head back and laughs” while on the other hand Maria Teresa “bowed [hers] and cried” (243). This scene is very significant because it shows Minerva’s strength and passionate hatred for the regime. The fact that she can just throw her head back and laugh it off suggests that she really doesn’t care any more about what happens to her, or so it would seem. Her main goal at this point is protecting her fellow people and her family who are clearly full of despair and sadness. Though Minerva is a very potent person, she also has emotions like any real woman would. Near the end of

the novel her emotions reveal the pain that this family and many just like it had to endure. Minerva genuinely confesses, "I had been so much stronger and braver in prison. Now at home I was falling apart" (Alvarez 258). Minerva herself realizes how much more mentally resilient she used to be while living behind the prison bars. Soon enough, however, things at home became real again and she can't let go of all the pain that she is experiencing. It can be said about Minerva that she "succeeds in redefining the role of the woman as wife and mother in the world that she helps to create" (Vega). Minerva is an intelligent and gifted woman with the ability to rebel against the regime in a time when she is just about getting her family started. It makes sense that at times she would have feelings of not being "superhuman status" (Alvarez 259) because she does have a family and husband to take care of, in addition to her revolution which also means the world to her. She even returns to La Victoria to see her husband despite the threats of the regime.

By the end of the novel in *1984*, Winston's own life is more vital to him than his relationship with Julia; however, he tries hard to salvage his relationship with her. There is a crucial time for Winston when it becomes apparent that he has gained some courage and bravery. He has a meeting with O'Brien and the Brotherhood to discuss about the possibility of Winston becoming part of that group of rebellion. When Winston is questioned about all the things he would sacrifice for the rebellion he says he would sacrifice all except for Julia, and Julia feels the same way. O'Brien asks " 'you are prepared to give your lives?' " and Winston answers with an assertive and firm " 'yes' " (Orwell 142). The fact that Winston is willing to give up his life says a lot about his transformation since the beginning of the novel.

He was once as fearful as can be and would never do anything to rebel against the Party in fear of what would happen to him, and how he is willing to give up his entire life in order to rebel. At the very end of the novel he is faced with his worst fear; rats. O'Brien at this point already exposed himself as being part of the Party and says that these rats are going to kill him. Winston immediately screams out, "Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia! I don't care what you do to her" (Orwell 236). It is clear at this point that Winston has betrayed Julia, and this alone proves that their relationship is merely a means of rebellion and not true love even when their relationship began to grow deeper. The intense fear of the Party has again overcome Winston's mental stability and has altered his view of reality of what is and what is not due to Julia's absence. Throughout the novel Julia has helped him overcome this "and their time above Mr. Charrington's shop gave him control over his present" (Place). This is accurate until the very end of the novel when Winston's life is threatened. In any case Julia has had a profound impact of Winston in improving his dauntlessness and his mental and emotional state of mind.

Through the novels *1984* and *In the Time of the Butterflies*, the relationships provide a way to examine how our relationships with people alter the way we go about overcoming the struggles in our lives. Furthermore, the characters in these novels reveal how our own self-identifications emerge from the efforts of the people who push, challenge, and love us. Both Winston and Minerva have been tested and dared by their original relationships with Katherine and Minerva's family. However, their future relationships only gave them the optimism and courage they needed to overcome the battles they were forced to endure under such harrying and

tyrannizing leaders. By the end of the novel Minerva was rebelling without the consistent help of Manolo, and Winston was prepared to give his life to rebelling. Neither Minerva nor Winston would have ever gained the courage they did to rebel without the social relationships they formed in the novels. Their stories might seem to be an extreme example of the challenges faced by human beings everyday in this rigid and materialized culture. However, in a more general way, the characters of Winston and Minerva show many sides of the conflict between the desires to accomplish goals, as well as the desires to please those whom we love. We may not live in a society belittled and undermined by some tyrannical leader in the extreme way that the characters in these novels did, however; they teach us an invaluable lesson, and one I believe we can all take away living in the avaricious era surrounded by the mainstream western values that we do. The truth is that we need one another to survive and grow. We are a social who prize and award independence and self-affirmation, but fail to recognize how our relationships with others bring us to our greatest successes and/or failures. Through these novels I examined that self-identity has less to do with oneself, than it does to do with our social associations with others. Without social interconnectedness, we would not be the people who we are in the present moment, and our identities would be uncertain.

These characters inform us of how essential our decisions are in choosing whom we surround ourselves with. This is of most importance because they are the people who teach us who we are and clarify for us, the people who we were meant to be which, subsequently leads to a happier self. If we choose, however, to

surround ourselves with oppressors who are nothing but a hindrance in reaching our goals, they do nothing but hold us back from reaching our full potentials and confidences. Everyone goes through times of trouble and when these occurrences develop, it's our relationships that become ever more vital. It becomes our responsibility to be certain that we are only choosing the people who will have the greatest positive influence and impact on our lives. Winston and Minerva's rebellion only truly begins after they accepted the people who made them stronger. These people supported Winston and Minerva's passionate hearts and encouraged them to be filled with bravery.

It may be comforting to believe that we alone are independent and fearless enough to take on any obstacle that comes our way by ourselves. In reality, possibly one of our deepest human flaws is not accepting our faults for what they are. Instead, we fool ourselves with false authenticity that we don't need anyone to reveal our weaknesses or even our strengths, which allow us to improve our truest selves to become the utmost person we can be. This may be a normal tendency for all of us, but all we have to do is look at the examples and experiences of our past to realize the truth that lies inside every human soul; the truth of love.

Annotated Bibliography

Alvarez, Julia. *In the Time of the Butterflies*. New York, New York: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1994. Print.

With her own uniqueness and a sensible, down to earth writing style, Julia Alvarez has gained prominence in the writing world. On her website there is a description of her life in relationship to her most popular writing pieces and in her relatable tone in the “About Me” section, one can see how her novels ever so gracefully are tied into her life in a literary way. Many literary critics see her to be one of the most successful Latina writers as her accomplishments are on an international scale. She has written and published five novels, four collections of poetry, a book of essays, as well as children’s and adolescent books. The influence she has made among Latin American literature has had empowering effects.

Gardner, Averil. “The Last Man in Europe: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.” *George Orwell*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987. 117-120. Print.

Averil Gardner provides an in-depth look into George Orwell’s life and accreditations. This analysis focuses on his life, works, career, and overall importance of him as an author. His well-informed understanding about George Orwell provides good insight in grasping his novel. His intense research on Orwell gives his literary criticism’s clout and sway over other critics of his kind.

Oliver, Kelly. " 'One Nail Takes Out Another': Power, Gender, and Revolution in Julia Alvarez's Novels." *Foucault and Latin America: Appropriations and Deployments of Discursive Analysis*. Ed. Benigno Trigo. New York: Routledge, 2002. 235-246. Rpt. in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Jeffery W. Hunter. Vol. 274. Detroit: Gale, 2009. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 28 Sept. 2016.

Kelly Oliver is a recognized author of more than 100 scholarly articles, thirteen books, and ten edited volumes. She is an American philosopher and novelist whose work contributes to feminism, ethics, politics, and media studies among other aspects of the relevant era. With a PhD in philosophy and notable professor at Vanderbilt her qualifications are undeniable. In addition, she has published in *The New York Times* and been interviewed on ABC television news along with other credible programs and networks.

Orwell, George. *1984*. New York, New York: Penguin Group, 1950. Print.

George Orwell

As a profound English novelist, essayist, critic, and journalist his work brings awareness of many issues he found of importance. He brought awareness to many social injustices, and wrote about his clear opposition to totalitarianism. Even today, his work still influences political culture. I believed that his opinions on social injustices could be used in a valuable way, even today, in the current age where discussions and issues of injustices are widespread. He provides

insight into totalitarianism that was so closely aligned with helping to answer my research question.

Parascandola, Louis J. "Love and sex in a totalitarian society: an exploration of Ha Jin and George Orwell (1)." *Studies in the Humanities* 33.1 (2005): 38+. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 27 Sept. 2016.

As the author of many scholarly articles and a PhD. earned, Parascandola has offered his wise contributions and opinions about many topics of importance in the relevant media. A professor and recognized specialist in in the fields of 19th Century-English Literature, Italian-American Culture, Literature of the African Diaspora including Anglophone Caribbean Literature. His offerings and assistances in analyzing Orwell's novel are of much significance.

Place, Troy. "Orwell's '1984.' (George Orwell)(Critical Essay)." *The Explicator* 61.2 (2003): 108+. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 27 Sept. 2016.

As a credible literary critic on the Literature Resource Center database, Troy offers valuable opinions on Orwell's novel. As a insightful writer I liked using his ideas as support for my own statements and thoughts.

Vega, Ibis Gómez. "Radicalizing Good Catholic Girls: Shattering the 'Old World' Order in Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies*." *Confluencia: Revista Hispanica de Cultura y literatura* 19.2 (Spring 2004): 94-108. Rpt. in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Jeffery W. Hunter. Vol. 274. Detroit: Gale, 2009. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 28 Sept. 2016.

Gómez-Vega is a highly educated professor who has written novels, short stories, and plays. In addition to her creative writing abilities she has written reviews, articles, and essays to many well-known publications. Her critical review that I used in my paper helped justify one of my main arguments in my essay.

Final Synthesis Essay

When I first was told what our theme would be for our class section, I had no idea how to portray self-identity in any type of capstone research paper, internship, or creative project. It is such a broad topic and I was unsure what capstone option I would even choose. I sat down one afternoon to really think about what I could do and finally I was able to come up with something. I knew of two books, *1984* by George Orwell and *In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez that shared somewhat of common plot and setting. I decided to take two the two books that both had a shared theme of oppression under governmental powers and the implications on human identities thereof, and relate them to our topic of self-identity.

As I was analyzing the two books, I found that they had a lot more to do with self-identity than I had originally thought. The two governments in these novels are very tyrannical and powerful. They bring up important issues that show the destruction that can occur on a person and on a society when governments have too much power. I think these novels also reveal the importance of social relationships, especially under oppressive forces. In both of the novels, their relationships with others help them in their rebellions and the courage to do so. Our self-identities aren't created through ourselves alone, they are a product of our connections with others. We need others for our survival and for our well-being and this for me, was the main take-away of this capstone project.

This project has been one that required me to work with others as well as independently. It was important to work with others because they helped me with

errors, and ideas, and the overall review and assessment of my project. This has been a challenging project to work on and has taken a lot of time and thought, so I know I could not have completed it without the help of my professor and colleges. Being a capstone representative, it was also necessary that I worked with others in decision-making that would ultimately effect our class as a whole. In the representative meetings we made the final decision on the picture and quote that were chosen to go on our capstone pamphlets and represent our class theme and projects. I took into account everyone's individual projects to help when making decisions like this. I also spent a lot of time independently working on this project. I have never spent so much time doing independent research, reading, and analyzing. Each week I knew what would be required of me through my proposal timeline and it revealed that time-management for me is a strength I possess. I split up my work evenly week to week and by the end I had completely finished my project a couple weeks before it was even due. One area that I struggled with was the flow of the essay and deciding what all I should add in the paper and what all I should leave out to make it easily comprehensible.

I learned a lot about self-identity through this project. It was interesting to hear about other college's projects and then relate them to my own project. Every week in class I learned more about our topic from discussions the class had, to assignments that we would read, or films we would watch. Self-identity I believe is so important in this day in age. We are in such a different era than our ancestors and knowing oneself, I believe, is more important than ever. We live in such a competitive environment where greed runs our economy and it's essential that

people have a vision of their own identify to make it in today's world. Our country alone is becoming more and more diverse, and having that diversity can make it challenging to navigate. In my project specifically, the two main characters rely on others to make survive and become more confident, self-assured people. As our world integrates as one, it's invaluable that we hold onto the people that we are and find confidence in ourselves in a period where cultures combine.

In a more personal way this class has also taught me about my own self-identity. I realized how I identify in the world and throughout all of my Human Communications classes, not just capstone, I now more fully understand my identity in such a diverse world. As a young child I didn't know how important it was to have an identity. As I grew up I started to realize that having an identity is so invaluable to ones own confidences and successes. Self-identity allows us to socialize and form relationships, and once those relationships are formed our own identities become solidified and self-confirmed making us more secure, self- assured individuals.

My project meets the criteria for the capstone essay option in a few ways. First, it follows consistent MLA format and uses very reliable sources found through highly academic databases. The sources used provide compelling support in my essay that further examine and justify my claims. The quotes cited are nicely integrated and appropriately and accurately cited using the MLA format. Secondly, my essay shows a strong relationship to self-identity with a central thesis of social relationships and it's influence on people thereof; and has a clear argument that is shown throughout the essay, ultimately relating back to our class theme.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the capstone project process and feel that in sum, it wraps up my college academic knowledge as a whole. I am certain that the topic of self-identity is one that will be undeniably useful in the coming decades and will be of use throughout my life.