After spring of 2017, I had completed all my general education requirements, but still had not gone through the process to become an individual studies major. The program requires you to take at least 30 credits once enrolled and I already had well over 90 credits. Thus, any courses in the fall semester would not contribute to my degree or graduation. However, I really wanted to take the African Politics course taught by Professor McCauley (as well as a French course) so I enrolled anyway. My submission for the Undergraduate Research Award is the product of the semester long research paper for GVPT 484.

The research paper required us to study individual-level outcomes within one of the countries surveyed in the 6th installment of Afrobarometer data. We were to do background research, develop our theory, conduct multivariate analysis using the data, and address the results.

I knew I wanted to select a francophone country that was relevant to U.S. strategic interests, as well as, investigate a topic that affected U.S. strategic interests and dealt with intelligence gathering. I sought input from Professor McCauley and a former military intelligence officer. I selected Mali because it was the one country that their suggestions overlapped.

The development of my topic was less simple. I wanted to construct an experiment that yielded information relevant to greater U.S. strategic interests and provided practical insight on intelligence gathering. I started by reading the codebook for the Afrobarometer sixth round survey and writing down all the variables I could see as relevant. I was unnecessarily methodical and identified 117 prospective variables out of the few hundreds of variables in the codebook.

My thought process began to evolve as I read through all the question over a few days. Originally, I was considering the issue of how certain groups could be mobilized in correlation to opinions on China or on the northern Mali crisis. It was when I reached the end of the codebook that I discovered post-survey questions that the surveyor reported about the interview and interviewee. This included multiple questions about the interviewee's disposition during the interview.

I narrowed my topic down to two elements. One was the effect of a person being from an urban or rural area on their opinions around the northern Mali crisis, which is relevant to U.S. strategic interests. The other element was the effect that the interviewee and interviewer native languages had on the disposition of the of interviewee, which is relevant to intelligence gathering practices. The issue I grappled with was connecting the four variables of two different questions into a single research question. I went to Professor McCauley for advice. He helped parse it down to using the urban/rural aspect as my independent variable, the interviewee disposition as an intermediary variable, and opinions relating to the northern Mali crisis as my dependent variable. So while omitting the effect of native languages, it still achieved my goal of covering both U.S. strategic interests and intelligence gathering practices.

The diversity of resources I used, to find my sources, is reflected in the diversity of citations I had. My resources were both physical books and electronic platforms, such as the generic Google search engine, as well as Library supported platforms (e.g. WorldCat) and private entities, such as Google Scholar. Some content I was led to by the sources used in Professor McCauley's lectures and assigned readings.

In conducting research I started with the most rudimentary approach of searching key words and changing the words when experiencing poor results. Researching the background of

the information came easy. However, it was difficult to find scientific literature that was actionable to the theory I was trying to construct. I shifted to doing numerous advance search heuristics on WorldCat. This improved the results, but I still was not able to find the ideal academic research for my subject. I met with Professor McCauley to discuss this. He encouraged me to construct my argument farther removed from the specifics of Mali and Western military presence by demonstrating the same principles in different fields. He also told me some technical phrases that were more common in the scientific literature than the wording I was using. This substantially helped me obtain better results.

I found studies that would make the point that I was seeking to make with their experiment. However, what was even more useful is that in constructing their argument they would cite numerous studies that already made the same point. Reading the actual studies cited in the papers that I first came across substantially increased the amount of content I had to work with and the strength of the argument that I could make.

I used a Word document as a repository for the sources I accumulated in doing research. My aspiration was to use all the research that I found. However, the amount of content I wanted to write about exceeded the necessary scope of the paper and ultimately my time available to write the paper.

One source in particular was a series of surveys conducted by the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation and collected in Mali concerning opinions on the conflict and foreign military presence. This was extremely relevant and I spent a day translating the content and taking notes of all the figures. However, the inconsistent nature of the questions longitudinally meant I would have to be very diligent in decipher representative trends, as well as, present it in the context of the events as they happened. I discuss this issue in more detail in my bibliography.

There were other sources, such as military scholarly and government papers, that I left out because of time constraints and because it excessed the required scope. However, the diversity of sources was still preserved in the final product.

There were two patterns to my curation of research and sources for the paper. The *Introduction* and *Background* were setting the stage of the paper and did not have to make rigorous scholarly argument. The consequence is that I was able to use the most diverse set of citations, including a blog. The recency of some events led me to use numerous news articles. There are also multiple reports, government publications, and a book.

The *Theory* was the in-depth academic presentation of my argument and reasoning. For this, I used scientific studies and scholarly books exclusively. This was difficult to do for one part because that aspect of my argument was based on scientific research I had heard second-hand years ago. That led me on a long search through my past academic papers to find the source. I wasn't able to find the source I had in mind, but I found a source I used in place in a past paper. This was a blog that led me find to the original studies, which I realized were portrayed inaccurately to me. I had to reflect the more nuanced results in my wording.

In the same vein, if a paper made a point citing another paper, I would search that paper using WorldCat and Google Scholar. I often would typically cite those original papers that the first paper I came across pointed me to. However, constraints on my time prevented me from parsing all the topics through the actual studies. This was the case with priming. I knew there was expansive scientific literature on priming. However, it wasn't feasible to delve into all the studies and discern which studies where the most original and authoritative. That is why my discussion of priming is limited. This affected my strategy for using sources. To compensate,

instead of citing a study, I referenced books, which I had read, that extensively covered the topic of priming and are considered authoritative in the field.

Going through this process made me realizes the value of citing sources in the paper instead of having just a list of citations at the end. as you gain more intimate knowledge about the field, you recognize other authors and their background. So instead of viewing it as being random names throughout the paper, it is another layer of information that lets you understand the research better. A good example of this in my paper was all the reporting provided by Nick Turse. It depicts how dependent some of my content was on one reporter.

It also demonstrated the value of formatting your citations earlier on rather than just compiling a list of links. Citations and bibliographies exist not for rigmarole, but because they enable researchers to better understand and stay on top of their research.

Trying to construct and rigorous academic argument with a lack of germane research led me to use the Libraries in a more thorough way. I have had multiple library presentations from my general education classes. There were a long time ago, but there still was a few pieces of information that helped point me in the right direction to navigating the Library resources and particularly, the electronic platforms.

The library allowed me to conduct Stata analysis with their laptops. I have always been fond of the library, using it late into the night, which I did many times for this project. My friends know me for sleeping in McKeldin routinely. One final weeks, I sleep in the library six times in a row. Needless to say, I find the Library to be a sanctuary for productivity and hard work. It's role was essential in writing this paper, which I am immensely proud of. I am going to be continuing this research and testing the validity of my dependent variable in a Georgetown African studies class I am currently taking through the DC School Consortium. It was my research on the Friedrich-Ebert surveys that enables me to do this validity testing and continue the research I conducted last semester.