

Ahlam Akmel

Library Award Reflection

02/10/18

As part of the McNair Scholars program, I was involved in a summer research program where I had to choose a topic to work on. I decided to look at the college matriculation rate among minority groups. This topic was important to me because during high school, I realized I was among the few minority groups that graduated and had the opportunity to attend a state university. I wanted to learn what the reason was that is causing less graduation rate among minority groups. Therefore, it was a topic I knew I wanted to learn more about, and it was the first topic that came to mind. From there, I started looking up research articles that discussed graduation rate among minorities. I used the university database to find the articles by looking at papers that contained specific words such as "Secondary school graduation" and "minority." This helps to minimize articles that do not focus on the specific group and the academic year. Using specific words when searching in the database helps save time from having to read article that do not have the specific information I need.

When working on my research, there were various times that I needed help on interpreting the data I collected from various research articles since they were used in different ways than the angle I was looking for. When I came across these types of issues, I asked for help from librarians and my research mentor. One of the few times I remember was when having to use the SPSS software. I was not inserting the data I received through my research properly, and could not display the chart and graphs I needed to test my hypothesis, and so I asked for help from the librarian at the time. The librarian was able to help me understand how to

communicate with the data, and how I should plug in the numbers in order for the software to understand the numbers and analyze. After obtaining the data for my research, I was still having a hard time understanding the graphs I have obtained. For this, my mentor, Dr. Bangura helped me interpret the information. Sometimes, it was hard to use secondary data and compare it to the research topic I am working on. For this, it was helpful to get a help from my mentor. I was able to then utilize the information and finish my research.

Once I collected the relevant sources to help me write my research paper, I had to then look in detail to see if the resources focused on the specific minority groups I was focusing on. This helped to minimize and finalize the resources I was going to use for my paper. Also, another important topic I focused on when choosing the resources was looking at what types of theories the paper utilized. This helped to understand if the perspective matched my views. These procedures I used when choosing sources was important for my research paper because they helped me understand the topic in the social theories I was researching, and allowed me to gain a more in detailed knowledge on the topic of school curriculums and how it plays a role in the matriculation rate among minority groups. The research experience I had and the research process I learned is important for me since I plan to pursue my PhD later in life. I have learned that it is important to look at topics with specific words that pertained to the research to makes obtaining information easier and allows for efficient time use.

Some of the things I would change from my research experience is how I initially did not finalize my thesis before going forward and doing my research. This was not efficient because I was starting to diverge my ideas from the topic as more theories started to imply other facts. This cost me a lot of time just looking at resources instead of relevant sources pertaining to my

thesis topic. To help with this complication, a librarian can help by asking questions such as, what is your topic, have you written a thesis that you are trying to learn more about. This can help guide a student into writing a paper and looking at sources that are specifically relevant to the research they are working on. This could probably be added to the writing guides provided at the library. While it seems obvious to have a thesis when writing paper, sometimes people can become indecisive regarding how to tackle the issue their topic looks at.