

I began my thesis research process by conducting an initial search of topic areas about which I am passionate. The topics included Global Health, maternal and child health, adolescent health and wellbeing, and homelessness. I created an outline of my literature review findings. I was then connected to Dr. Elisabeth Maring of the Family Science department in the School of Public Health, who offered to mentor me during my thesis writing process. Dr. Maring had recently begun working on a project about Global Health education on the undergraduate level. She knew that I was interested in Global Health, and invited me to join her in conducting this research project. With the goal of eventually turning my findings into a manuscript for publication, I began my research by gaining a deeper understanding of the project's goals. Our initial project topic posed the question, "How should readings/textbooks, competencies, and expectations differ between undergraduate and graduate global health programs? This study is assessing how those who teach and develop undergraduate Global Health programs are defining these elements of their Global Health curricula." To better understand the material we were working with, I conducted an initial review of the data collected from our mixed-methods survey, making note of interesting responses and organizing the questions in a logical manner. Analysis of the data raised a new question: "What are the challenges in developing undergraduate Global Health programs?"

To learn about current research on Global Health education, I conducted a literature review. Dr. Maring suggested a few articles to read, which I searched for through University of Maryland's library database. The university's vast library database had been extremely helpful for research I conducted previously. As such, it was the database in which I began my initial search. With Dr. Maring's help, and from the library information sessions I attended throughout my college career, I gained greater skill in narrowing down my search using correct terminology.

I searched phrases such as “global health education,” “public health education,” and “defining global health.” I used quotations around essential words to optimize my search results. In addition to taking advantage of the university’s database search function, I searched for articles and book chapters in Google Scholar and PubMed. I found these databases to be helpful in increasing the amount of related material on my topic. Another search function I used was EbscoHost (Academic Search Ultimate) as another research tool for identifying articles and chapters pertaining to my topic. As I read through articles, I noticed common journals the articles were published in. I then searched online for digital copies of these journals, and read through them to gain a better sense of the writing style and structure for articles about Global Health accepted for publication. This was helpful both for furthering my understanding of the current research about Global Health education, and for understanding the structure required for a published manuscript. I kept a folder on my computer with all the articles I found, and kept an up to date bibliography to ensure that the various pieces of my research remained organized.

As I conducted a review of the literature, I took notes on each article in a Microsoft Word document. To evaluate the sources I found, I made sure to include peer-reviewed articles published in the last 10 to 15 years, unless it was a foundational article on the topic. After conducting my review of the literature, I discussed my findings with Dr. Maring to gain a further understanding of the state of the science. Additionally, I asked questions about formatting, citations, thematic analysis, and structural questions to librarians through the School of Public Health and Dr. Kerry Green, the director of the Behavioral and Community Health departmental honors program.

After conducting a literature review, I began thematic analysis of the data. Specifically, I conducted modified open, axial, and selective coding. Dr. Maring shared a qualitative research

methods book with me, which I read to better understand how to conduct a thematic analysis. Each time I conducted further analyses, I created a new Microsoft Word document, which I shared with Dr. Maring using the university's Box application. During our weekly meetings, Dr. Maring and I went over the research and analysis I had completed during the prior week. These in-person meetings were extremely helpful in improving my understanding of the research process.

I learned a tremendous amount during my research process. The skills I have gained in utilizing various online databases and journals will be directly applicable to my future academic and professional goals of pursuing an MD/MPH. The skills I gained in conducting thematic analysis, specifically open, axial, and selective coding, will be useful in future research endeavors in the field of public health.

The only aspect of my research experience I would change would be to explore more diverse databases and journals to broaden my scope of understanding of the topic. I also would have had planned a few in-person meetings with a librarian to ensure that I was utilizing various research tools to my best advantage. The explanatory workshops about library resources offered during various public health classes, in addition to the accessibility of the library team, have benefited me greatly throughout my four years in College Park.