

For my final project in PERS251: Modern Iran, we were asked to find a topic of our choosing to explore, and mine is of great personal significance. My mother is an Iranian immigrant, as is my boyfriend of two years and most of my family. There are many stereotypes within the Iranian community regarding people who have recently come over, and when it comes to dating, most of those stereotypes don't paint Iranian men in a good light, and in my personal experience with my immigrant friends weren't accurate. As a scientist and mathematician, I know that anecdotal experience does not evidence make and as a result, I chose to research the transformation in trends in dating and relationship norms for Iranian immigrants who have come to the US over the last four decades. It is a topic that in recent years is relatively unexplored, and though there is a lot of secondary literature on old trends, nothing on new norms exists.

In order to conduct my primary research, I decided to interview immigrants who had left Iran in the past forty year with an anonymous survey. Participants, between 13-25, were asked several questions regarding when they came to the US, their background, their opinions on sex within and outside of relationships, what they look for in partners, and their thoughts on marriage and dating. They were also asked to answer the questions as they would have within a couple years of having come to the US, and were asked to pass it on to any immigrants they may know.

Although my primary research results weren't easy to obtain, my secondary research results were initially more difficult in comparison. Finding appropriate sources was almost impossible using Google alone. When I described my struggle to my professor, she suggested I use the UMD library system. After searching the WorldCat on lib.umd.edu, I in fact found almost every single one of the fourteen sources I used, in addition to many more. Searching on the website was quite easy: I simply had to use combinations of the keywords "immigrant", "relationship", "sex", "dating", "marriage", "young", and "adolescent", in addition to adding "Iranian American" to every search. After finding several initial sources, I was also able to find some researchers who consistently published within the field, and was able to find more sources by searching the database to see what else had been published by the various authors of those first papers I found. Finally, I emailed a few of the most prominent or well published authors I found to see if they had any suggestions about additional sources.

While I was lucky enough to identify several potential sources, I only needed a subset of the articles and books I was able to find. From the pool of potential sources, I narrowed the list down by eliminating those that didn't mention anything about dating, relationships, or sex, and those that didn't at some point discuss people in the adolescent to young adult phase of life. Not all articles had to be focused on immigrants because some of my background was developed and written around traditional Iranian trends, which of course were practiced by those in Iran. Once I tapered down my list to a manageable size, I read the chosen papers more thoroughly and then decided if information could be of use or not while building my argument.

I learned a great deal about doing research in the humanities last semester, including how to go about finding sources, and how to do primary research in such a way that you aren't selecting for your argument by asking leading questions. While I intend to go into a STEM profession, the lessons are still valuable ones to learn, and applicable to any career in a broader sense. Making sure you know how to find information within your field, especially pertinent information rather than related but unnecessary information, is very useful for biologists and mathematicians alike. Additionally, taking care to frame research in such a way that results aren't being selected for is of the utmost importance in any field, regardless of the nature of your research. Using the skills I learned, I'm excited to move forward and expand upon the research

during my second Iranian history course this semester. While I would have liked to begin this last semester, I wouldn't change an iota of what I did because I feel I learned a great deal and was able to write a much more cohesive argument due to the fact that I wasn't overwhelmed with data.

The only minute detail I consider worth improving may be the search system available on the library website. While the search bar itself is fantastic, it required several hours of trying several variations of a few keywords to find the combinations that yielded the most results. I think there two potential avenues to go about enhancing that process. The first is implementing a smarter search bar, one that can identify what you're searching for and suggest either a set of keywords that may offer more results or simply offer what it thinks you may be looking for based on your last few searches in addition to what your primary search pulls up. It could also suggest authors that consistently came up in the last few results. This would be difficult but somewhat similar in nature to Google tailoring its results to the person searching or computer being used to search. The second is categorizing every article or source in the library in such a way that you would be able to go to a general page, select a main category, and continue selecting subcategories until you've reached a subcategory in which a huge subset of your desired or related sources fall into. Although these suggestions aren't perfect, I believe they're a step in the right direction towards making information more easily accessible to everyone seeking it, thereby allowing a library's purpose to be more easily fulfilled.