

Research Experience/Reflection

Over the course of the semester I've increased my proficiency in conducting purposeful academic research. Before this class I had never made a literature review that had a specific dependent variable I was attempting to analyze. My previous experiences led me to research a topic very generally, whereas in this project I was specifically attempting to find research that would allow me to investigate the variable of socioeconomic status and its effect on parental involvement. This was also my first time attempting qualitative and quantitative research on this scale. In doing so I was able to comfortably navigate R Studios to code my quantitative results using the survey questions that operationalized my variables. The process of coding qualitative data by seeking out themes in the open ended question answers from the survey respondents was another skill I gained proficiency in over the course of this project.

The process of selecting sources consisted of attempting to identify ways my dependent and independent variables were linked. Additionally I was attempting to uncover a potential gap in the research, which I did successfully. I was able to note the way different cultures perceive what parental actions are considered "parental involvement," and how this could lead to further research.

I initially encountered difficulty during my research when trying to search too specifically. In an attempt to quickly identify how socioeconomic status affects parental involvement, I might search that question, instead of searching more generally and reading multiple pieces. This process revealed to me that oftentimes the answers to questions are buried deeply within academic works, and the first few links may not have the information needed. Quantitative research and the world of coding was new to me, however my understanding for

categorizing data (nominal ordinal or ratio for example), and using a coding program to create descriptive statistics has risen significantly. Qualitative data analysis and the process of finding themes came fairly naturally to me.

My overall proficiency in navigating academic literature has undoubtedly been the most notable improvement I made this semester. Through writing my own research paper I am now better at navigating dense text to understand where to find the information I need. In some cases spending time reading the methods section may not be efficient if the answer to your research question lies in the data and discussion sections. Additionally, the tendency I used to have to use other literature reviews to conduct research is no longer a habit of mine. I have developed the understanding of how synthesizing each individual study is a better way to create an understanding for a research topic. Analyzing quantitative and qualitative data no longer feels like such a daunting task now that I've gone through this process step by step. I am now very comfortable with conducting these forms of research.

At the end of this semester I can confidently say I know what it means to "Think Like a Researcher." As researchers we must be clear and concise to gather data accurately, and constantly create and test hypotheses to develop answers to our research questions. Thinking like a researcher means being organized and methodical, as well as being formulaic about how we go about finding answers to our questions. In doing all this we must also be hyper aware of adhering to the ethics of research, considering we are often dealing with human subjects whose rights must be respected.