

Reflection

Since the beginning of the semester, I have gained an abundance of knowledge about survey research, conducting studies and how to write a research article. About four months ago, I had little to no understanding on how to organize a research study and was intimidated about writing an article on one. I had struggled in the past with reading research studies, absorbing all of the information and truly grasping the point of the literature. Throughout the semester, I conducted a study that measured family involvement and developed each section of the study at separate times. Breaking up the sections of the article and writing them individually not only made things simpler, but gave me an understanding of the different information in articles. I now recognize the importance of each section and what it is telling the reader. The abstract, literature review, methods, findings and more have different, but significant meanings that tie the whole article together. This information allows readers to fully engross the details and findings of a study. I can say I am more confident when reading research articles and can now conduct them myself!

When deciding which articles to use for my literature review, I focused on peer-reviewed articles that were relevant, interesting and within the past twenty years. Typically, I prefer articles that are more recent, but for a study like this I felt it would be beneficial to see what had been found in the past and has changed over the years. The articles I was attracted to the most were ones that had different points of views. For example, one of my articles explained childcare workers' opinions and ideas about parental involvement. It stood out from other articles about parental involvement because it showed opinions that did not come from a parent or guardian. There were no sources in my final paper that were added to or deleted from my literature review, as they all contributed something unique. Finding several articles that supported my topic, while

being intriguing but different in some way, was extremely beneficial in understanding the information throughout this study. It allowed me to see how important it is to do research before conducting a study, too.

Challenges are normal and expected when conducting research. The articles used in my literature review were informative and relevant, however there were some challenges in finalizing which ones I used. A lot of the articles I utilized from the Longwood University database were not relevant, well-written or different from the last. The main challenge faced was accessing several of the articles I chose. About half of the articles I initially discovered required granted access, so I searched for others in the meantime. The grant did not come through for a few days, so some of those original articles could not be used. This did not take my paper in a different direction, it just gave different perspectives and information than the other articles would have. Another struggle was not getting many responses from this year's study. We still added to our data, but not as much as we had hoped. Lastly, a small challenge experienced was communicating with a separate class involved in this study. We shared information between the two classes through shared document pages. This was not the best execution, but with patience, it worked out.

As previously stated, my perception and attitude towards conducting research has absolutely changed from the beginning of the semester. I was intimidated, and didn't think I would be doing a research study for undergrad, but it has been the best learning opportunity in many ways and will be extremely helpful in the future! I knew little about research, specifically how to write a research article. A lot of work and time went into this, but when split up into different sections throughout the semester, it was quite simple.

The research I've done this semester has been educational, enlightening and new. To "Think Like a Researcher" means to broaden your point of view, be accepting of ideas, know how to handle challenges when encountered, and be mindful and patient. I feel more confident in my ability to observe, process and analyze. I am no longer intimidated by reading or writing research articles, which is one of the greatest skills I have personally gained throughout college. This research study has given me a new set of skills that will undoubtedly assist me in my future career in the Criminal Justice field.