This semester, I learned how to do research in a whole new discipline. My process for doing academic research has changed a little bit because as a history major, I do not write papers about things occurring in the present, or about issues going on currently. I write in the past, so it was different writing about issue closer to present day and writing about issues that are especially relevant today as students are still struggling in the schools and parent involvement is not the same was it was before COVID. My academic process has been altered now that I have written a full research paper and performed a research study with my class. It has been interesting performing this research study this semester and has changed my perspective on how I do research. I have not had to look for qualitative and quantitative findings before. I have found that finding the qualitative data for a research study is like writing a book review. You must fin three themes for your qualitative findings, and you must find themes out of the book to write the book review and analyze it. Doing research for sociology is almost the same as doing research for history. There is just a different way of thinking and a few extra steps along the way.

When I was choosing sources for my literature review and for my paper, I chose them based on how recent they were and what factors were being described and if they were large enough topics to affect parent involvement. I decided which sources to use based on how much information I could use and how descriptive their abstract. I added one more source when writing my abstract and introduction, but other than that, I kept the same sources. I added one more source because it was relevant to my topic on socioeconomic context and its effect on parent involvement.

I encountered many challenges along the way. When I was doing research, it was very difficult to find research studies that were specifically discussing 3-5-year-olds and how their parents’ household income affected their involvement in their child’s life. I had difficulty getting started and finding sources at first when writing my literature review, but once I got started and got a little encouragement, I was finding sources left and right. After finding the sources, the main challenge was picking out the key points of the study. When looking over a research study, you want to paraphrase and summarize the whole thing, but when writing a literature review, you must summarize it to the purpose of doing the research, what the research entailed, and the results of the research. To overcome these obstacles, I took a break, came back to the research later, and tried again with a new attitude.

My confidence level about doing research has changed. It has improved. At the beginning of the semester, I had a negative outlook on this class, especially as I was writing my literature review. I thought that I was not going to do well on the literature review, and it was going to hinder my performance in every other part of my paper that I submitted. While I did not do so bad on my literature review, I was given feedback on how to improve it. I also did really well on the other parts of my research paper when I turned them in. I feel a lot more confident about doing research in sociology than I did at the beginning of the semester, and I believe that is mainly from doing so well on the assignments throughout the semester.

I think the phrase “Think Like a Researcher” means that students are able to solve problems and analyze real-world situations while assuming the role of the researcher. You must take on the attitude of the researcher in the process as well. This means being passionate, curious, humble, and persistent. While some people who have these qualities are not good researchers, you must maintain a balance. Thinking like a Researcher is not just a mentality, it’s applied to all aspects of your personality. It is applying constructs and observations to real-world situations and real problems.