

Reflection paper

I feel as though I have learned a lot about the process and sheer amount of work that goes into doing research. Coding was something I had not realized needed to be done but makes the process much easier and more concise. By using coding, we were able to pick out important pieces of relevant information from the completed research. I also had never programmed and used a bivariate analysis before which was interesting to learn about. Bivariate analysis allows us to compare our independent variable(s) with our dependent variable, showing us the relationship between each level. I have never done such in depth research that was also so hands on. I enjoyed participating in creating the surveys and searching through the results in order to come to the conclusions we did throughout the course of the semester. I did lots of research in order to find the sources I used in my paper. I looked up target words including “Headstart”, “family involvement”, “effects of family involvement”, and more on our university databases and skimmed through the results I found. I wanted to find sources that talked about the Headstart program, the long and short term outcomes of family involvement and how education of the parent or child affected the child overall. When searching, I skipped over sources that mentioned socioeconomic status, race, gender, etc. because I wanted to focus more on education and outcomes. After getting feedback on my original literature review I did not choose to add or change any new sources and instead added more details about specific sources.

One major challenge I, and others, faced is the fact that we only received limited survey responses from our Family Fun Time Activities. This put a dent in our data collection and made it difficult to come up with generalizable results. To adapt, we combined datasets from previous years, 2019, 2022, and 2023 in order to have more data to work with and pull from. I did not

come across many challenges individually, the only one I can think of is finding sources that related to the topic I wanted to research. It took me a long time to find sources that were appropriate and had outcomes from longitudinal studies as well. To help, I looked through three different databases and used different target words, as mentioned above. This helped me explore many sources and expand my pool of study to different disciplines. Using different target words helped me find a variety of articles which allowed me to focus on many aspects of my specific topic.

My confidence level surrounding research has most definitely increased. In the beginning of the semester I had a vague idea about how to complete and analyze research but was not confident in doing so. Coding was something that seemed difficult at first but proved to be helpful and something I enjoyed doing. I felt confident that I could find similarities and themes within the data, making me sure of the direction I wanted to go with my research. After learning and conducting research this semester I feel as though I could conduct research on my own or even better with another person or group. Having others to fall back on and collaborate with was helpful through this process and allowed us to bounce ideas off of each other.

Thinking like a researcher means to think outside of the box. When conducting new research you need to have ideas that are different from the research that has already been completed previously by others. Finding similar research studies to the one you want to complete helps you get a base idea and understand what has already been found. As a researcher, you then need to expand on those ideas and create new ones in order to find new information and grow what we know about the topic. Thinking like a researcher also means you need to be flexible. Not everything is going to go as planned and turn out perfect so you need to be prepared to adapt. Our research is a perfect example, we ran into an issue, we had to adapt, and we overcame

the problem and created successful and informative research. Overall, being a researcher means you must have a desire to learn about, collect data, and present findings on a topic you are passionate about.