

Reflection

Timothy Crowley

Prior to completing this research project and this class, my research skills were minimum, meaning looking for reliable references, creating citations, knowing how to create surveys, and knowing how to analyze data were not skills that I was proficient in. This project allowed me to expand my critical thinking skills and adapted me to learn skills outside of my comfort zone. For example, prior to completing this class and completing this research project, I did not know how to correctly find reliable references and cite them correctly. Furthermore, this class helped me frame a good research paper, which I did not know how to do. Meaning, I never knew how to write an abstract, analyze data to put the data in words, but after this class and research project, my critical thinking skills expanded, and I was able to diligently create a valuable abstract and interpret data into words. Through this class and research project I learned that research is a useful skill for any profession and is a skill that is beneficial for anyone to have.

Throughout this writing and research process in this class, it was hard in the beginning to find valuable, reliable references to use. When writing my first intensive literature review in this class, I struggled with finding key references that were valuable for my topic. When looking for sources, I used Google Scholar and SocINDEX through Longwood University's Greenwood Library's website. I gained valuable experience when looking for sources as I was taught to look for specific keywords relating to my topic, I was taught to look for recent references with a date range and was taught how to decide if a reference was reliable to use for my research project. When completing my literature review or annotated bibliography, throughout writing it I kept changing references in order to find information that I did not have to fill gaps that I was missing,

but once I finished my literature review, I did not change any of my sources, as I felt it was not necessary to do so.

Throughout my research process in this class, I ran into multiple challenges along the way. Some were minor, some but very little were major. I challenge that I ran into in the beginning of this research process in this class would be the process of synthesizing information of sources. This process was a struggle for me, as I used to summarizing and not synthesizing. Fortunately, throughout the research process and this class, I was able to comprehend the process of synthesizing and believe that I am now proficient to complete the process of synthesizing. Another struggle we as a class faced was receiving surveys back from participants. I do not know exactly why it was hard, but I have a few thoughts. I believe that it was difficult to receive these surveys back because the surveys looked like they had great length; therefore, participants may not have wanted to take the time to do them. To try to alleviate this difficulty we sent books home as an incentive to complete the surveys.

My confidence in doing research improved greatly through this class and this research project. In the beginning of the class, I was skeptical that I would be able to do research correctly, but I believe that was just because it was my first time doing intensive research. My skills on researching have improved drastically, as I am much more confident in my ability to find references about a certain topic, much more confident in analyzing and interpreting data, and much more confident in my ability to create and distribute surveys. In the beginning, my skills for analyzing data were lacking, but after completing this class and research project, my skills for interpreting data improved greatly. For example, when it comes to qualitative data, I had no clue what I was doing to interpret that data, but after completing this class I am able to read and comprehend that data and figure out themes associated with the data and use quotes to

support my themes. It was intriguing to me how to interpret qualitative data and was an interesting skill to learn.

With the research I have completed through this class, I have high respect towards researchers and their everyday jobs. Researching and conducting experiments is not easy, in fact rather difficult. To me what it means to “think like a researcher” is to be able to critically think and interpret data in a way that I never thought of. It allows you to look at results and analyze those results into a sociological lens to identify how those results impact society. It allowed me to realize how differences in people’s backgrounds have an impact on their entire life. It allows us to gain an understanding of how societal issues and differences, shapes and structures the foundation of our society today.