

Reflection Essay for Library Research Contest

This research paper was completed in Fall 2022 as part of the requirements for the CSUSM Sociology major. During the process of learning about the application of qualitative methodologies to research, the importance and benefits of using the tools provided by the CSUSM library were repeatedly highlighted.

A research guide created by librarian, Lali Nataraj, provided the necessary steps to perform successful research within the library sociology databases. Further, a literature workshop with peers was completed as part of the process of developing this paper, where students shared examples of peer-reviewed articles they were able to find. Students were asked to describe the research question of the article and provide a short statement summarizing the article. Students also discussed what they learned from the research articles that they found in the library databases, including how the article connected to the topics of their research. The literature workshop was highly beneficial, as it further helped with the process of navigating the voluminous amount of quality resources contained within the library.

Two such databases, JSTOR and Sociological Abstracts, were utilized to complete the research for this paper, each with different benefits. The benefit of the JSTOR database is that the vast majority of their articles can be accessed at little or no cost. The benefit of the Sociological Abstracts database is that the search criteria can be limited to show only articles which have undergone an extensive peer review process.

Identifying useful articles was an easy process during the early stages of literature research; both the JSTOR and Sociological Abstract library databases contain numerous articles on antisemitism. The identification of helpful articles became more challenging in the later stages of literature research, however. This is primarily due to the specific sociological themes being

developed for the paper that limited the scope of specific keywords related to antisemitism that could be searched.

In order to identify high-quality research articles, a “narrowing down” process was utilized, whereby the database searches began with the keyword, “antisemitism,” and additional keywords were added in subsequent searches in an effort to narrow their scope. Boolean terms, such as “and,” “or,” and “not” were also utilized as a means to this end. The searches that proved most helpful were those that contained the keywords, “discrimination,” “violence,” “online,” and “trends,” in addition to the main keyword of “antisemitism.”

Student-scholars build their research on the hard work that others have done before them. It is the job of these scholars to find common themes within the data, organize those themes, and present the themes in such a way that they contain new information. As such, the role of a student-scholar is three-fold. First, a student-scholar needs to present and frame their newly acquired knowledge in a way that is understandable for their audience. Second, a student-scholar must possess a passion for learning their subject, as well as knowing how to utilize potent resources, such as university libraries, in order to gain their desired information. Finally, a student-scholar must possess an open mind for new information that might challenge their preconceived knowledge.