

Natalie Salas

SOC 361

Professor Roche

Reflective Essay

Library Research Award: Reflective Essay

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of first generation Latinx students at a college university. My research focus is on the experiences of Latinx first-generation college students in higher education. As a Latina first-generation college student myself, I wanted to learn about the experiences of other Latinx student's and shed light on their experiences. To do this, I utilized qualitative research methods and a critical research methodology. I used the library database to learn about critical methodologies and to gather background information on Latinx students in higher education and develop a structural framework. The literature I found through the library database provided a sociological focus with theories and concepts that aided my exploration of Latinx students. I used this information as well as course readings to create an interview guide which allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of my participants' experiences. Once I gathered my interview data and did a content analysis, I identified key search terms and themes that provided a broad, sociological understanding of the experiences of Latinx first-generation college students.

I used the CSUSM library database as well as resources provided by our social sciences librarian throughout the research process. I began by using Sociological Abstracts to find literature about the experiences of first-generation college students. I also found literature by using JSTOR and Google Scholar. I generated search terms connected to themes from my interview data and used these themes to find literature about topics such as whiteness and white power on college campuses and how this impacts a sense of belonging for Latinx students. I also

located literature that helped me to understand the role of “imposter syndrome”, or the feeling that one does not belong in a college setting. This connected directly to the experience of my interviewees. Using sociological abstracts helped me to focus on other important opportunities for analysis such as the importance of a diverse faculty, the push and pull of family obligations for Latinx students, and literature that highlights how Latinx students resist oppressive forces in their efforts to be successful college students.

The resource guide provided by our social sciences librarian was helpful in guiding me towards determining if an article was scholarly and sociological. Once I was able to find and verify the literature I wanted to use for my paper, I referred to the library course guide for the required structure and format of my paper. This was my first time using the CSUSM library database, and I found that it was easy to navigate and the additional tools to support citing and formatting were very helpful.

The scholarly literature I found through the library database helped me to link to established theories and scholarly findings to analyze my own data and to offer a sociological understanding of the experiences of my interviewees. While all my interviewees were Latinx first-generation college students, they all had different experiences in higher education. The importance of highlighting their experiences is to acknowledge their struggles and provide the necessary support systems for their success. My role as a student-scholar is to provide a voice for Latinx first-generation college students through my research.