

CSUSM Library Award Reflection

Jordan Gaeta

I have a passionate interest in the science of applied behavior analysis (ABA), and particularly the social skills interventions supported by the field. As my research explored, social skills are correlated to a plethora of outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This makes social skills interventions a truly fundamental component of an individual with ASD's treatment and care. For that reason, I decided to conduct an analysis of many different social interventions that have been examined through past empirical research.

I examined the strengths and weaknesses of both the intervention, and the research itself. Looking through this lens allowed me to analyze not only the effectiveness of an intervention, but the validity and reliability of the reported effectiveness based upon the strength of the research. I reviewed 15 different instances of empirical research observing social skills interventions. An additional 15 sources were also gathered to support various points and deductions made throughout my paper. In total, 30 sources of empirical or authoritative nature were gathered.

The library database was absolutely instrumental during this process. I became very familiar with the search function and grew to be more and more efficient with quickly finding information relevant to my interests. Although I only used 30 sources, I likely read more than twice as many instances of research while gathering my information. This was a crucial step during my research process as it allowed me to fully immerse myself in the topic I was observing. I believe that it can tend to be not only unreliable, but also academically irresponsible to simply pick the first instance of research that you stumble upon and include it in your body of information. This value was instilled in me by my first research methods professor during second

year of college. Researching in this manner definitely demands more time and effort, however I truly believe that it allowed me to produce a much more reliable and conducive product in the end.

After I spent some time in my deep dive, I began to notice two additional variables that needed to be considered. I deducted that the mediating variable of the intervention and the age of the participant may be influential in the effectiveness of said intervention, so I decided to also observe these variables. From here, my research project truly took shape. After a couple weeks, I resurfaced from my information dive with a great selection of research to analyze. The next step in my research was to carefully read through each instance of research and observe the strengths and weaknesses of the social skills interventions, and the procedures of the studies themselves. To ensure that I was thorough, I wrote a 2-page review of each article. This allowed me to both organize my analyses, and to hold myself accountable to truly scrutinize the content of each article.

After approximately two months, I was ready to transfer all of my information into a paper. First, I drafted a well-structured outline with the guidance of my academic advisor. After this was completed, I summarized and transferred key information from all of my analyses into the paper. This process was undoubtedly the most challenging. I never imagined that my problem would be too much information, but that is what I encountered. My first draft was 24 pages long prior to adding my bibliography. This led me to restructure and revise numerous times.

During this time, my steady relationship with the library database was still going strong. As I constructed my paper, I simultaneously gathered sources to support my points being made from my analyses. I gathered the 15 additional supporting sources during this time. By the beginning of December, my paper had undergone numerous revisions and was finally finished.

The library was the foundational component of this research. It allowed me to work hard on this project, which subject and content thereof means a great deal to me. Since I've been given the chance, I'd like to thank the team behind our library database at CSUSM. The incredible resource provides students like me near limitless potential to become immersed in our passions as we learn. Thank you for taking the time to read about my experience.