

CSUSM University Library Award for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity –
Empirical Research

After inductively coding 52 interview transcripts using Atlas.ti as part of my Independent Study course in the Fall of 2023, I delved into the literature to help deepen my understanding of the themes that emerged in the lived experiences of mothers navigating through poverty. My literature review extended beyond the confines of my research paper as I sought to apply diverse perspectives and theories in my goal to better understand the lives of poor mothers. This process brought about a new level of awareness of their strengths and the disparities they face due to stigmatization and gender and income inequalities. I read dozens of articles that further built my understanding of philosophical theories such as Bourdieu's Cultural Capital and discovered new theories such as Tara Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth. After reading articles from journals and researchers across the world, I returned to the data with a more deductive eye, emerging with a new conceptualization for the social phenomena I observed.

My process for utilizing the library's resources included a systematic process of keyword searches based on my observations of the interviews using Google Scholar. These keyword searches helped narrow down concepts of interest which I would take to CSU OneSearch on the library website to further narrow the search. To narrow the search and find peer reviewed works, I utilized several databases such as Sociological Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts, and ProQuest. These searches not only facilitated my understanding of new theoretical frameworks but also connected the nuances within the data to larger themes.

A particularly valuable strategy of searching I adopted to increase my breadth of knowledge was a strategy I learned from a Librarian during a library workshop presented during one of my classes. This method includes procuring additional sources within a similar topic by navigating to a source of interest and looking at the "suggested sources" section. Since Community Cultural Wealth is a relatively new and underutilized framework, it was challenging to find other research that applied it. Despite the challenge of finding literature on this relatively novel concept, I was able to locate and request sources from across the globe utilizing the interlibrary loan services, which ultimately led to a breakthrough in my research.

It was only through the wide variety of resources the CSUSM Library has to offer that I was able to read about experiences, ideas, policies, and theories from across times and places. As a result, I applied a new context to a developing theory that will spread awareness of a marginalized population. My goal is to use this research to inform policy change and eliminate the stigmatization of public assistance in the US. Throughout my research journey, I encountered diverse perspectives and embraced the lived experiences of individuals facing immense challenges. This experience enriched my growth as a researcher and further developed my passion for a human-centered research approach.