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2018 Prized Writing Reflective Essay

Literature Review: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder as a Physical Injury

Throughout my writing process, I frequently sought out advice from my instructor, Dr. Cassie Hemstrom, who strongly encouraged me to take advantage of the many resources made available by Shields Library and conduct focused, thorough research. I started with the library's online guides and tutorials on how to efficiently find, evaluate, and utilize information, such as "5 Steps to Better Library Research" which was particularly helpful in outlining an effective information funneling method. Following this strategy, I spent more time in preparation and background research than I have ever done before. This proved to be incredibly helpful, and I was extremely well prepared and ready by the time I started writing.

In refining my broad topic of posttraumatic stress disorder, I used the online UC Davis Library Catalog and library textbooks to gain a general understanding of the subject. Shields Library's expansive catalog was indispensable because it allowed me to read excerpts and chapters from the many different suggested texts from my professors, establishing significant background knowledge to ensure understanding and accuracy in my writing. As I continued to delve deeper into the subject, I developed a search question that refined my thesis of PTSD as a physical injury. A valuable tip that the online guide suggested was creating a "search term list," which not only helped me find directly applicable studies, but also kept me focused on a single, coherent topic while writing.

This review contributes to a new take on PTSD by compiling groundbreaking research to address the impacts of social stigma. Through the support of existing scholarship, I hope to draw

public attention to the scientific community's developing understanding that PTSD is a physical trauma, not purely a psychological one, as it is most commonly thought to be. Given the relative novelty of this perspective on PTSD, I was looking for studies as they were being published. The library's databases, particularly PubMed, JSTOR, and Elsevier was extremely helpful as it allowed me to access the most recent publications that were not yet easily found through popular search engines. Before referencing each paper in my review, I ensured that they were reliable sources of information by checking if they were frequently cited by other researchers and the credibility of the journals they were published in. As a final assurance that the science presented was sound, I asked one of my neurobiology professors to read over my paper.

My greatest challenge in writing this review was the sheer volume of research that I needed to conduct to learn about a subject that I did not have prior knowledge on. However, the plethora of resources made available by the library helped me accomplish an expansive paper that I could be confident in and proud of. I learned how to most effectively utilize library resources and gained a set of research skills that I have continued to use in other classes and other research projects.