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Lang Prize Reflective Essay

As a psychology major, I wanted to anchor my thesis in reputable psychology

scholarship. However, I also wanted to incorporate my religious studies minor into my research

topic as I enjoy learning more about both subjects. As I had the freedom to choose my own topic

of research, I first had to do some preliminary research to narrow down my subject. As a

graduating senior and an aspiring therapist, I was in the process of looking at counseling

Master's programs as I plan to apply this fall. Through exploring the various graduate program, I

noticed that very few programs offered courses on multicultural issues. As a member of a

minority community, learning about these topics was of the utmost importance as I hoped to one

day serve this community. Therapy is often viewed as a privilege afforded to Caucasians, and

thus the services and literature that discusses this topic are centered toward this audience. Even

when pursuing my undergraduate psychology degree, I witnessed the lack of discussion on

diversity and cultural issues. Thus, I knew that the graduate programs I applied to would have to

introduce these subjects in some capacity. My preliminary look at the programs was quite

eye-opening as I found minimal talk of diversity topics in the course descriptions. From these

initial discoveries emerged my thesis topic.

Multiculturalism and diversity are often discussed within the religious studies

department, as religion and spirituality often influence how people practice and view the world.

It is a driving force in human experiences. Thus, when beginning my literature review, I wanted

to explore spirituality and religion as I found it a topic seldom examined within psychology

scholarship. I always found this omission strange because therapists are in a career where

learning about behaviors, values, and thoughts is paramount. It is the backbone of providing

excellent treatment, and religion often plays into the characteristics therapists seek to understand. As a result, I began my literature review by doing a broad search on religion and therapy, hoping to read more on the subject to help me hone in on a more specific topic of examination. I always start with a wide search on Google Scholar and JSTOR to get a general sense of the popular research topics on the subject. I will usually, in this step, just look at the titles, trying to see what subjects researchers are looking into. If a title catches my attention, I'll read the abstract. This step is just about familiarizing myself with the literature.

I then started more ardently looking for research by browsing the subject guides provided on the UC Davis library website. This is always my first stop as it gives me a list of journals and websites to consult in my field of interest, and more importantly, I can be sure that the sites are reputable and are quality journal recommendations. Through looking at the psychology guide, I knew to consult APA Psych Info, PubMed, and PsychiatryOnline.

Knowing how to broaden or refine a search while using databases is equally important during this initial step, as while browsing papers I found interesting, I had to slowly narrow my search to include more of the keywords I would like to explore. Using the 'AND' or 'OR' function helped me during this initial step, as it allowed me to include keywords I wanted in the articles I consulted. I like to keep my keyword search relatively broad during this part of my research process. I do not limit myself to the apparent search like 'religion AND therapy'; instead, I employ related words often used in the literature. This can include terms like 'spirituality,' 'psychiatry,' 'psychotherapy,' and 'culture.' This approach expands the type of literature I am exposed to and introduces me to a range of journal articles I could refer back to. During this stage, I like to keep track of journals and articles that I find the most informative and relevant to my topic.

My thesis advisor also counseled me to start collecting my sources in an annotated bibliography. He suggested it may help me keep track of journals and articles I found informative. My annotated bibliography included the research article citation, a description of the source, including what question it hopes to answer, and the results. In this stage, I would not read through the whole article but would skim through the abstract and the discussion sections. Reading only these two sections ensures I do not waste time reading through the entire article when it could be unrelated to my topic. By keeping track of what papers I found interesting, I was able to find a thread between all the articles and find a more specific topic for my literature review. Writing a summary of the articles helped me later when structuring my paper. By looking at my annotated bibliography, I could see weaknesses in my argument and find articles that could address or strengthen my paper. Thus, taking the time to do this extra step helped guide my decisions on what type of scholarship I needed. The library also conveniently provided a citation for the work on their online page, saving me time as all I had to do was copy the citation into my annotated bibliography and, later, my works cited.

After completing a preliminary search, I was able to more specifically explore cultural relativities' impact on psychological research, particularly when discussing and implementing religion and spirituality into treatment. In order for readers to understand the current state of incorporating religion into counseling, one must first examine the history of this topic. This informed which databases and journals I consulted as I needed a historical perspective. The library collection was beneficial in this regard, as most of my sources for this section were books. Through the library's general collection, I was able to access seminal psychological works, such as those written by Sigmund Freud, that anchored my literature review. As I was often busy and could not physically stay in the library to look through the books, I would

sometimes scan the pages or chapters I found the most pertinent using the various scanners across the library. As I am a visual person, I like having a physical copy of the book to annotate and pull quotes from.

Although most books were either physically in the library or digitized, I did have some books and articles I needed help accessing. Through looking at their summary and various abstracts, I knew the books could help anchor my writing; however, they were not digitized. The interlibrary loan proved helpful in this regard as I could easily request the articles, and they would become conveniently accessible, with either the physical book sent to the library for pick-up or scanned and sent to me digitally.

The UCD Library also gives students access to BrowZine, a helpful tool enabling users to browse specific journals and look through every edition. Some journals that were especially pertinent to my research were 'Psychology in the Schools,' 'Psychology of Religion and Spirituality,' 'Archive for the Psychology of Religion' and 'Cross-Cultural Psychology and Diversity.' This consolidates my search and helps me when I am trying to selectively look for an article that answers a particular question or addresses a topic I need to learn more about. For instance, I browsed through many articles from the Journal of Religion and Spirituality when initially deciding on a research topic. It helped me dip my toe into this area of literature and familiarized me with the research conducted in this area of study. The app also has a feature allowing users to build their own bookshelf. This feature helps me keep track of articles I found interesting but may not be relevant to the section I am writing now. I can also organize my bookshelf and make lists of papers depending on the subject or topic to help keep me organized. Thus, I can add the article to my bookshelf and return to it later when writing the relevant section

in my paper. This way, I can consolidate articles based on themes to help me save time when starting a new section of my paper, as I already have a list of sources I could use.

Throughout my writing process, I had to ensure that the resources I used were of the highest quality and, thus, peer-reviewed. Ulrichs Periodicals helped me identify which journals were reputable and trusted, as did using the filtering options on databases like ProQuest and Project Muse, as they helped me include only peer-reviewed articles. Many databases, including ProQuest, also contained a helpful feature that suggested related items and articles. The suggested sources simplified finding articles that were examining the same subject. The filtering option also helped me read more recent publications, as I could filter the articles based on year.

When writing my literature review, I often found it challenging to find articles discussing the various culturally bound syndromes I examine. For example, I get very few results when I try locating articles that specifically highlight Amok and religion. Thus, I had to get creative to find articles that addressed a psychological subject but from an analytical, historical perspective rather than a scientific one. Thus, I had to move away from looking at journals that concentrated on the descriptive nature of psychology, such as describing details of behavior and symptoms, and start exploring journals that focused on culture and anthropology. Therefore, the content of the articles would be less likely to examine the biological and physical aspects but rather focus on the societal and environmental factors that help researchers understand culturally bound diseases. Being conscious of what type of information I am looking for and what specific journals include in their issues helps me save time looking for relevant articles to support my claim.

Another challenge I faced when writing my study portion was finding sources discussing multicultural competence within the educational system, particularly concerning counseling and

psychology graduate programs. I found a lot of data on the overall competence of counselors while they were in the field, but I was more concerned with finding information on the educational system itself. Consequently, I had to refine my search and be a little more creative with what sources I looked into. I realized there was a lot of discussion on the topic concerning cultural education during medical school, highlighting good intake interview techniques. As a result, I had to expand my search and first look at medical journals and, from there, look at papers discussing multicultural education within psychiatry. As an adjacent field that utilizes the DSM and therapy, I could make connections to understand how counseling programs could teach the topic. From there, I would look at the article's reference pages, as they often cited psychology papers that discussed this subject. This enabled me to find articles on the subject that I once found hard to find.

I sought to provide a comprehensive look at how cultural relativities translate into counseling education and treatment by analyzing the ways a Western cultural perspective has colored language surrounding treatment. Utilizing the various tools at my disposal allowed me access to a wide range of scholarships that helped ground my argument.