Reflective Essay

My research paper, titled "Music Therapy in the US Healthcare System: Past, Present, and Future", was an incredible learning experience and one of the most interesting papers I've ever written. I learned so much about the various topics within this paper, including the rich history of music in healing across the world, and how it has rooted itself in the modern healthcare system. I couldn't have accomplished this research without the help of my mentor, Professor Juan Diego Diaz, and librarian researcher, Ruth Gustafson. They both opened my eyes to the rich history of music in healing, and Ruth gently guided me in finding the relevant research that has been done on these topics, allowing me to put my best efforts into the journey of completing this project. The skills I developed over this quarter will help me in graduate school, allowing me to be a true professional scholar and researcher of my own.

When I began the research process for the past, present, and future sections of this paper, I struggled with finding papers, books, articles, etc, that aligned with the subject I was researching. In the past, I relied solely on Google Scholar, hoping to find papers relevant to the subject I was writing about. I used that same strategy for this paper until I ventured into Shields Library to borrow a physical copy of a book I used within my paper. This is where I met Ruth Gustafson, who graciously showed me the overwhelming extent of the online library database. My information research process was fine-tuned and perfected, and I began to use CINAHL, the Oxford Music Database, Pubmed, and a few others, typing in the keyword (s) related to the topic of each section. These databases produced the targeted results I needed, giving me a wider variety of papers to choose from than Google Scholar did.

There were a handful of strategies and methods I developed to narrow down my search. I first chose the corresponding database that was most likely to have the information for which I was looking. Then I made sure the information was very specific to my subject. I used the Oxford Music Database/JSTOR for the music in healing/music therapy history topic. I used CINAHL/Pubmed for any of the therapist/insurance-related information. I also used a tip Ruth gave me, to search for a word that could have multiple endings by using an asterisk, like "music therap*" or "insur*". This gave me a wider variety of results, while also keeping my range narrow enough to weed out unrelated papers.

At the beginning of my research process, I encountered a few challenges, including a lack of sources that related to my subject, and inaccessible websites with a paywall that contained the papers I wanted to use. The history of music therapy doesn't have an extensive amount of research on it, and the topic of reimbursement surrounding music therapy has even less. While these challenges were initially difficult, I overcame them by using the databases I could access through the library, combined with the search tips Ruth had provided. I found that the various databases on the library website had helped me acquire the information I needed from both the music and science fields. I also originally struggled to format the various types of sources I had in my bibliography. Thanks to the library's APA formatting guide, I was able to tidy up my sources and properly reference them in-text and in my bibliography.

With this newfound access to these databases, I had a plethora of sources from which to choose. I developed a method to evaluate my resources, which helped me narrow down the ones I wanted to use for my senior project. Once I found a paper that contained the information I was interested in, I checked for a few things: how old the paper was, how many times it had been referenced in other papers, and whether it was properly peer-reviewed or not. I also would look

into the authors of each paper, examining their background and the amount of research they had done on these topics. This helped me narrow down the exact sources I wanted to use in my paper by allowing me to be more selective. The sources I ultimately ended up using gave me an immense amount of information to reference within my paper but also allowed me to freely express my ideas and thoughts when writing about the past, present, and future of music therapy.

No AI tools/technologies were used in the writing of this essay.