

Research Competency Essay

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### My Future in Research

When I was growing up, hearing the word “research” reminded me of scientists in lab coats mixing chemicals and entering data. What I didn’t realize is how broad the term “research” actually is. Research is defined as the act of gathering information about something. However, the unfortunate truth is that “today’s undergraduates are generally far less prepared to do research than were students of earlier generations, despite their familiarity with powerful new information-gathering tools” (Breivik 2005). I found this to be true when I first came to Mankato State, but I am now gaining knowledge that will take me far beyond the level I’m at now. Research can be done in a wide variety of ways, anything from a simple Google search to a capstone research project for your major. At this point in my college career, I am just beginning to learn more about research and what it entails. I have learned about information literacy, information synthesis, the importance of research ethics, and I am starting to look into my future as a researcher here at Minnesota State.

Information literacy is defined as the ability to recognize a need for information and the ability to locate, evaluate, and use the information effectively. I feel that I have acquired this skill through writing my competency essays for this class. The reason for this is that I recognize the

need for information as I look to build paragraphs within my papers. Next, I locate the information from the honors handbook, my own experiences, guest speakers, personal research, and the books and articles that we read in class. Finally, I begin to plan out how I can put the information together to create an effective argument or to get my point across. This class has given me the ability to differentiate between good sources and sources that are not relevant to the assignment, and ultimately I am able to produce a satisfactory piece of writing. It is for these reasons that I believe I have already learned a lot about what it means to demonstrate information literacy, and I will continue that learning process as I go further in the honors program.

Closely related to the concept of information literacy is information synthesis. This is the act of finding relationships among sources and combining them to show how they are related, and to draw some sort of conclusion from those combined sources. I have definitely learned this skill this semester as I have done the reading responses for this class. The majority of those reading responses depended on the synthesis of different articles to create a central idea. Due to the fact that we had multiple reading responses, I was exposed to the concept of information synthesis multiple times, therefore I was able to develop those skills throughout the semester.

The issue of research ethics is becoming more prominent in today's society, and it is important for students to learn about as they begin their journey in research. Research ethics are important because they ensure that the planning, conduct, and reporting of research should involve the protection of human and animal rights. There are laws in place which ensure that these rights are protected. I have learned about research ethics in my psychology class this semester, and I was able to see what both good and bad research ethics look like. The American Psychological Association guidelines state that in order to conduct ethical research, one must do

no harm, accurately describe the risks, ensure voluntary participation, minimize discomfort, and maintain confidentiality, to name a few. In my opinion, everyone who is planning on doing any kind of research should know what ethical research is and how to demonstrate it.

I expect to develop and practice my research here at Minnesota State by starting to brainstorm what it is that I would like to research in the future. As a nursing major, it will not be difficult to find a topic of research. I will be able to work with the many professors here who are in the same field that I am pursuing, and I hope to get a fulfilling experience by working with them. In the present time, however, my main focus will be on how to do research rather than what I should be researching. If I develop that solid foundation of knowledge, I will be much more successful when it comes to actually doing my research. I am aware that these plans are subject to change, but no matter what happens with my major or plan of study, I will try to find a way to incorporate research into it because research is vital in our world today.

Although I still have a lot to learn in regards to research, I feel that my college experience so far has provided me with a solid foundation on which I will build my knowledge of research and begin to find ways to apply that knowledge. I have learned about information literacy, information synthesis, and research ethics, along with beginning to form a plan for my future in research here at Minnesota State.

## References

Breivik, P. S. (2005). 21st century learning and information literacy. *Change* 37(2), 20-27.  
Taylor & Francis.