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Winning entry for 2018

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Describe how you came to choose your topic, specifically noting any pre-research that you did. What sources did you use in this pre-research? To what extent did you consult with librarians, faculty, or others? How did this pre-research lead you to your topic?

The process through which I arrived at my final topic was very time consuming. The first proposal I wrote was about protest repression, media coverage, and the police. For this, I first consulted the textbooks as well as other assigned readings for our class and I critically examined their bibliographies to help guide me in the direction of appropriate and related literature. This search involved exploring both theoretical literature to establish a framework for my analysis, as well as information on potential case studies and primary sources that could be used to take the existing research in a new direction. Using those sources as a springboard, I compiled a large list of peer reviewed articles and books on protest policing, policy, and organization, as well as on media coverage of protests. However, as I began to read through those texts, consult with my professor, and meet with research librarians, I realized that what I had proposed could be three separate papers. While my research clearly started with a very large scope and a lot of energy was used to research topics that I did not write about, over roughly a month and a half of reading and evaluating sources, I eventually guided and narrowed my initial interests into a topic that was appropriate for the course: Media Framing, Violent Protest, and Race: A Comparative Analysis of The Wall Street Journal and the New York Times' coverage of the Ferguson Protests

Describe your process of finding information for your project. Note specifically the tools you used to undertake your research, as well as the specific search strategies you used within these tools. (Note: "Ebsco," being an umbrella vendor, is not a specific enough response when identifying tools; listing the "library database" is also an unacceptably vague answer. Specific tools include JSTOR, America: History & Life, Web of Science, etc., along with OneSearch, the new library system.)

As I described in question one, the first step in my process was exploring the sources used in the bibliographies of sources provided for my course. Following that, however, I used the library's OneSearch, JSTOR, Political Science Complete, Google Scholar, and Lexis Nexis as the main tools for finding new articles and books. Within all of the databases I would do advanced searches with a variety of different search terms such as "framing," "media framing," "framing violence," "framing race," "framing protest" and many combinations within those terms. I would then read the abstracts to gauge potential relevance, and save every potential article to RefWorks so that I could later examine their methodology, data, and conclusions. For anything I could not access through those databases, I used both the CTW network, WorldCat, and Inter Library Loan to access them. Additionally, within JSTOR I explored the utility of their text analyzer, which is in its beta mode. For collecting my primary source newspaper articles, I initially used ProQuest Newspapers. I even contacted them, with the help of Andrew Lopez, to learn about how

they code and sort their articles. For my data collection process, I used ProQuest Newspapers to search all articles published in certain date ranges based on set search terms in order to create frequency tables of article publication, and then to do content analysis of a selection of those articles. I realized, however, that some articles were coded inconsistently, and consequently double counted, which threw off all of the article counts. Thus, I did not end up using that particular database. Instead, I used the website search function for both The New York Times' and the Wall Street Journal's sites. Using the search functions within each newspaper required more manual work, and I even called the WSJ to get information about how their search feature functioned, but it ultimately provided me with the data I needed.

Describe your process of evaluating the resources you found. How did you make decisions about which resources you would use, and which you wouldn't? What kinds of questions did you ask yourself about resources in order to determine whether they were worthy of inclusion?

I went through several different steps to evaluate my sources. Firstly, for my literature review, I only considered peer reviewed articles and books. Within sources that met that requirement, I would examine their research methodology as well as their bibliography in order to gauge the soundness and scope of their argument and conclusions. This process, however, still left me with more articles than I could use. Consequently, I made my final selection with the intention of laying a base to the framing literature, then additions and variations to that literature, and finally critiques to it. The ultimate goal was to paint a well-rounded picture of the literature. The process for selecting background pieces for my case study was more challenging. For one, due to the slow process of academic publication, there does not exist a huge body of peer reviewed literature on the Ferguson protests. Consequently, most of the information on what transpired had to be gathered from newspaper and magazine sources. This, however, left me in a paradoxical situation because I was being pushed to use newspapers as the background for a paper in which I was arguing that newspapers paint a "framed" version of what transpired during the Ferguson protests. To try and mitigate this issue, I used a wide range of newspapers and magazines, as well as any quality academic literature I could find, in order to cross reference and evaluate the validity of my sources. While this did not totally eliminate the issue, it definitely reduced its severity.