Olivia Klutse

Undergraduate Research Award Reflective Statement:

I submitted my literature review as a free-standing project, as I am still in the process of completing the remainder of my Sociology honors thesis project. In order to write my literature review, however, I did embark on an extensive process of research and reflection that began in the spring of 2017. A combination of three factors sparked my initial interest: one; seeing Charles Mills speak on campus about (Black) reparations, two; Taiaiake Alfred’s call for non-Indigenous people to consider their place on Indigenous land; and three, reading about Eve Tuck’s epistemology of centering desire, rather than damage in research. I ended up refining my topic during my initial research process, when I discovered there were few resources that articulated my exact interests. I even emailed Charles Mills asking him for resources about decolonization and reparations, and he didn’t know of any. As I wrote in my IRB application¹, “there is a deficit of literature which examines the conjoined economic and social liberation of Black and Indigenous people”. Thus, it was the shortage of resources that inspired me to embark on a project that stitched together what I dream of existing.

One self-imposed challenge that I’ve faced while completing my project has been self-accountability. The combination of a drawn-out timeline and the feeling of being entrenched in my habits of procrastination felt particularly daunting. My solution has had two facets: first, my research advisor, Dr. Luft, and I decided to set up regular meetings to discuss my research. Having a source of accountability aside from just a looming deadline has been immensely helpful. Secondly, Rome wasn’t built in a day, and neither was my literature review. I’ve come realize the value of doing work in small chunks and aligning, as best as I can, the times I work

¹ I did not include my IRB application with this submission because I only submitted my literature review, which does not include my interviews of human subjects.
with my own natural cycles of productivity. I still struggle with procrastination, but I feel far more equipped to resolve my self-imposed struggles. I am grateful I have had this year-long research process, because it has taught me more about myself as a learner and a researcher than any other academic experience. I know this experience will serve me well in my pursuit of graduate studies, when the time comes to write my MA and PhD theses.

This research process has reminded me to appreciate the value of tangible books, and not to confine myself to digital articles or databases. There will never be a replacement for stumbling across an unintended, yet well-fitting resource while browsing the stacks for something else. In a way, the portion of this research process that involved physical browsing of materials evoked a sense of nostalgia in me. I had the distinctly somatic experience of sitting on the fourth floor of the library, surrounded by a stack of promising titles, just as I ritually did as a child in my hometown’s public library—I can attribute at least three of the references in my literature review to this process!

The process of writing this literature review has unveiled library services I, and many of my peers, had no idea existed. It sounds novice, but I had not bothered to venture beyond Primo as a database before my supervisor (I work at the Circulation Desk) suggested LibGuides—specifically, Sociology—to me, and I discovered the triad wonder of JStor, EBSCO, and ProQuest. The most valuable technical discovery I made (also thanks to my supervisor), however, was the ability to request articles from Interlibrary Loan. Considering I would have had to pay an inordinate sum to access these articles otherwise, I am grateful to be privy to ILL’s digital services. I have gone on to use these services for other academic projects, and I will miss having the institutional access to thousands of resources during my approaching hiatus from
academia. It does lead me to a point of reflection, though, that I hope to pursue in my future research: how do libraries--public, private, and academic--serve simultaneously as vehicles of intellectual liberation and gatekeepers of access to knowledge? It is a topic I have been ruminating on; nonetheless, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to conduct research with the resources Lemieux has offered me.