

Arak Journal, Overcoming Challenges

How did you address challenges you encountered in your research?

One of the earlier iterations that I had for poverty and food insecurity was that I was trying to tie it to political instability. I was drawn to the fact that there were commonalities between social upheavals and uprisings and hunger. There's a reason that we saw bread riots in both the French Revolution and in the Arab Spring. There was a high correlation with social upheaval and the rise in food costs. I didn't have that universality that I was looking for. I didn't have that...that...you know, that red flag. After going through some more literature, that helped me refine it and frame it. And sort of--I was afraid to do so--but widened the perspective, you know? What happens when a place is politically unstable if the institutions cannot function to help their citizens? Well then those who are most vulnerable--those who are most poor--are the ones who were more susceptible to increases in food insecurity.

I suppose my biggest challenge was making it not as technical. It was finding pieces that weren't giving me all the scientific and legal jargon. Because, like I said, it was difficult to find the survivor stories and to relate that in a way that didn't come off as appealing to pathos without having any real logic behind it. It's...it's always a very difficult area. Like when you have to mix the two, just finding ways to support your research and support your topic. And I think I found definitely that almost every source I used had statistics all over the place and nothing saying, "This is the real impact of this." And that's why I really reached out in the end to Paul, because I just wanted someone to sit down with and talk to about it instead of staring at a computer screen.

I think the 10-page thing was really difficult. I always over-research so I went in and I was like, "Okay, I'm gonna find any resource that I can possibly find on this and I'm just gonna compile it all and see where I end up." And even then I was realizing, just talking about like person to person, I was not finding enough. So I really had to kind of push myself to say, "Okay, what can I do to fill 10 pages? What can I do that's gonna be, like, related to the topic, and informational and important, but at the same time help me, like, reach the page limit that I needed to make?" So that's where I think the journalist angle came in. Which is something where I was...as I was writing, I'm like, I can't believe I hadn't thought of this before as like a, you know, student reporter, and someone who is involved in journalism. And I was like, "Oh, well obviously there's some sort of, like, influence here and something needs to be said about it."

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