

My final research question has changed drastically from the time I started working on it. Originally, I wanted to explore the link between poverty and Appalachian spiritually medicinal folk practices because I was inspired by the indigenous practice of talking the fire out of a burn. However, the syncretism between said folk practices would be very difficult to trace without oral history, and I could find few sources on it. When asked about expulsion practices (which would play a significant role), I thought of “Federal Indian Boarding Schools,” which sparked my main focus. I wanted to define values of whiteness within the assimilation process and argue for further needs for reconciliation between Indigenous tribes and the United States government.

The most significant information sources that I pulled from were the Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center and the Genoa Indian School Digital Reconciliation Project. These archives provided me with the majority of my primary sources, which were the newspapers circulated by each of the institutions I focused on.

When searching for sources under my original topic, I was working with Dr. Bell, my United States history professor, who I had taken numerous classes with. However, he helped me to take my project in a different direction when we narrowed down my topic. I found that most sources were either too niche to access (like oral history interviews), were in the late nineteenth century (out of his area of expertise), or there was simply too little recorded information. He was the professor who really got me thinking about expulsion practices and then referred me to Dr. Woods to better assist my research. Working closely with Dr. Woods impacted my work positively because I had feedback and support for something I was really passionate about. She expanded my skills on how to write history by guiding me through the research process, and was there for me when I was struggling with my research and health at the same time.

I selected primary sources to derive my main argument, and secondary works of scholarship to support it. For primary sources, I chose newspapers from two Federal Indian Boarding Schools: Carlisle, Pennsylvania (the first and model one) and Genoa, Nebraska (to compare Carlisle to so that I could ensure my argument was not an outlier). From each of these, I selected quarterly newspapers from three years around the height of each school, whether that was the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. I chose my secondary sources by working closely with Dr. Woods, who recommended me books like *Education for Extinction* and journal articles that contextualized indigenous terminology and erasure. I also looked in the footnotes of some of the books I read for other sources that seemed relevant.

I evaluated my primary sources and secondary sources by looking at subjectivity and reputable publishers. For my primary sources, I looked at who wrote the information (school staff, students, the families, the United States government), what information was being provided, the diction used to describe this information, when it was published, and what was going on at the time to skew perspectives so that the information was provided in this format. For my secondary sources, I looked at the credibility of the author, including but not limited to: Who were they publishing with? Did they have any personal connection to the subject matter? Why were they writing? What is their field of expertise? Are their sources credible? What is missing from their argument?

During the research process, I learned a few things: I was capable of arguing an original thought, it was perfectly normal to ask for assistance, and that there are so many resources to use when writing a paper. I struggle with both my mental and physical health, and it is often discouraging when I want to get something done; whether it is schoolwork, visiting loved ones, or running errands, I always have to plan around my health. I did not think that I would be able

to write an entire thesis, but I am extraordinarily proud of it. I was also afraid to ask for help because sometimes I did not think my work was important enough to trouble anyone with. However, Dr. Woods' support and that of my cohort really helped me to understand that everyone wanted me to succeed and there was no shame in relying on others for assistance. This is especially beneficial in a professional field because there is often a lot of collaboration, and communication is key! Finally, it really set in that there are a large number of resources accessible when writing a paper. At the University, there is the writing center, the libraries, inter-library loans, and any professor who is willing to answer questions. There are friends to talk to for bouncing ideas off of one another, and there are other peers who may be interested in your work. There are forums, numerous archives, guides, journals, books, courses; nearly infinite resources if you know how to navigate and access them. This makes writing a large paper a lot less scary when you know you have all of this information and help at your fingertips.

Personally, I would change my research experience by managing my time better, but that solution is probably the most difficult because time management is relevant to every individual. However, here are a few tangible solutions for the library to better benefit my research: A newsletter that you can subscribe to where it will alert you to new books in your field of research, hosting specific groups where people are just there to work on long papers so that they can use each other to body-double, and a citation-checker (or a master list guide on how to do each citation style so that everything is in one place).