2022 LAURE Reflection Story Essay

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An Analysis on Research Methods involving American Poverty and Education

As an interior design student in the Department of Architecture and Interior Design, the library has aided me throughout my academic career at Miami University. The Wertz Art & Architecture Library is the first place I visit when I begin a project. My relationship with the library began my sophomore year. Stefanie Hilles, our department librarian, gave a presentation on library aid, research tools, and ways to connect with the campus libraries. This presentation stuck with me, and played a crucial part in my senior capstone research project.

In the Department of Architecture and Interior Design, our class structure is project based. We are given a fabricated project description, a list of deliverables, and a timeline to complete the project. Interior design is often thought of as an aesthetic application. However, interior design affects peoples' behavior and wellbeing. Good design does not originate from personal preferences or trends. Successful real-life projects heavily rely on evidence-based design. To emulate a professional grade project, design students must have a strong foundation of research. There are three main factors to investigate: what social functions will it serve, who will benefit from the design, and how has this been implemented in the past? These three topics translate into different areas of research. First, social sciences supply answers to design functions. Second, demographic information ensures design is focused on intended users. Lastly, designers use research called precedent and typology studies. Precedent studies are spaces that have successfully conveyed at least one of the three areas of research above: who, what, or how. These studies show modern day examples that communicate desirable design ideas, whereas

typology studies are historical examples of the types of spaces one would design. Studying typology reveals changes over time. With this combination of research, design grows into something meaningful.

Design is a *service* to society when research is conducted correctly. It can aid in societal change just as effectively as policy, morals, and implementations. For my senior capstone research project, I wanted to do just that; use my designs to make change. My capstone research journal, titled *A Pipeline to Education: The Tools to Draw America's Children Out Of Poverty*, addresses the issues of America's children in poverty while explaining that access to education may very well be the tool to get out. The journal studies the effects of educational opportunities available for low socioeconomic students in relation to their estimated success in adulthood.

The research journal consists of a literature review, precedent studies, typology studies, project description, and project programming. For the literature review, I had developed a specific research outline for the topics covered: history of American poverty, contemporary poverty in the US, race in poverty and education, connection of poverty and education, and ways education can improve poverty. The library database provided access to numerous peer-reviewed articles, books, and government documents. I collected these resources by using the research guide by subject tab. This led me to databases like JSTOR and ERIC, specific to my topic of study. The majority of print sources were readily available through the library. For the first time, I had utilized the Interlibrary Loan system to acquire sources which were not available through OhioLink. Resources were made available in a timely fashion, which was crucial to meeting my deadline. Interlibrary Loan grew to be extremely helpful when obtaining other case studies and peer-reviewed articles. Other web sources, such as national statistics, were electronically delivered after reaching out to the education librarian, Jaclyn Spraetz. Prior to this meeting, my

research lacked statistics, but overall, this was an important element for analysis. Connecting with the librarian helped me build a fuller approach to my research. Peer-reviewed articles backed up by social science aided my arguments about the long-lasting and ill-effects of poverty in the United States. These studies dive into complex issues and address poverty as a whole. Statistical data from organizations, such as The US Census Bureau and The National Center for Education Statistics, grounded my research in indisputable evidence. The second part of the research journal consists of precedent and typology studies where I analyzed floor plans, transformation of space layouts, social and functional use of spaces, and interior materiality. Highly respected architectural databases were presented by the department librarian, Stefanie Hilles, during previous interior design projects. I continued to use this resource, as it has become a routine part of my design research. Through precedent studies I examined schools, libraries, community centers, daycares, and more. These spaces helped assess and determine the programming needed to serve my function. After determining what types of spaces were needed, I analyzed historical examples. Through typology research, I was able to determine best planning practices, theories of design, and favorable dimensioning of my educational and communal spaces.

Project description was determined by the data analysis. The poverty cycle is a vicious and unjust one. To combat this complex societal issue, an education and career development center will be designed to form an environment where underprivileged children can expand their mind, develop desired careers, and build community. Such a program required extensive research to be designed accordingly.

My experiences with the Miami University libraries have been humbling and pleasant. For my most intensive, and most rewarding, project of my academic career, I heavily relied on

the library's tools, resources, staff, and study rooms to create a well-rounded academic research journal. Without the help of the library, the journal would be an empty shell of personal opinions. I have continued to design the education center for my interior design capstone project this spring semester; constantly, I refer back to my research to ensure I can deliver a project that successfully serves the inhabitants, community, and society. This project, and Miami University libraries as a whole, have taught me valuable research skills that I will carry through my future career as an Interior Designer.