

María Fernanda Junco-Rivera: 2018 Research Award Entry Essay

There were a few steps to planning my research. Picking my topic was easy because it was a personal interest of mine. Then I outlined the three key points I wished to highlight: the language used to sexualize Latinx women, where this sexualization appears/why, and a recognizable example of this sexualization. I then began searching for sources on the library's databases which I knew how to navigate from previous experience. I went to the databases for English subjects and searched places like ProjectMuse and EBSCOHost for anything related to my three key points. I pinned articles to my folder so I could return to them later and then I began pulling out and analyzing quotes that I could embed them into my paper. From the articles, I also noted key points/words that I could search for later if I needed more/different evidence. I also looked at the works cited within these pieces and searched any of those relevant citations. The biggest challenge I faced while researching this essay was the lack of information available on my first key point. Contrary to what I believed there is no substantial amount of reputable academic research focused on the language used to sexualize Latinx women. I made two separate trips to the library and spoke with both Maryke Barber and Rebecca Seipp and, while both were successful in finding sources for other aspects of my paper, neither discovered anything about the origins of any words used to sexualize Latinx women. I ended up using the Oxford English and Spanish Dictionaries to define the terms and then I pulled quotes from articles that used similar terms within the context I needed. At the suggestion of my professor, Nick Miller, I also included my personal experiences surrounding these terms as evidence. I had never considered including my narrative as "reputable" or "good" writing, however, my professor helped me use my story as evidentiary support in a way that did not detract from my essay's "scholarly" value. Many of the choices I made that resulted in my final work were based completely on my beliefs. In picking a subject that I have a connection to I knew which direction I wanted to go in. Choices surrounding technical/grammatical changes were made based on advice from my professor. Any choices about the content were left entirely up to me with some minor suggestions from my professor. I wanted to write the piece that I was unable to find in my research, so I took my collection of pinned essays and dissected them, specifically their introductions and conclusions. If I found an essay not pertinent to my research, I unpinned it. If it was relevant, I kept it and further analyzed the body of the work. Because this was a topic I was passionate about it was not difficult to cut out anything unnecessary or make major revisions; if I needed to remove an entire paragraph to strengthen my essay I removed it.