# Research with Confidence: A Library Workshop

Kirstin Duffin, Booth Library, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL

## Introduction

"Research with Confidence" is a one-hour interactive library workshop based on principles of resilience in the psychology literature and aimed at upperclassmen to advance their research skills. The workshop was publicized to minority students in collaboration with our Office of Inclusion and Academic Engagement.

Resilience, the ability to bounce back following adversity, can be taught at the undergraduate level in order to promote student success (Blechman, 2000; Maddi et al., 2002). This project explored how academic libraries can play a formative role in the academic success of underrepresented students through encouraging traits of resilience and addressed the question:

Does resilience skills training, as part of an information literacy one-shot session, increase underrepresented students' confidence in the research process?

## Methods

Sophomore, junior, and senior undergraduate minority students, defined as including persons from non-white ethnic minorities, were invited to attend a library skills workshop in Sept. 2019. In total, 874 students were sent an email invitation to register for the workshop.

Following a quasi-experimental design, participating students attended one of four 1-hour library workshops. Two workshops served as control groups, in which students received traditional information literacy instruction. In the other two workshops, students received a combination of resilience skills training and information literacy instruction.

Resilience skills training was modeled after recommendations summarized by Forbes and Fikretoglu (2018): targeting a vulnerable population, providing an adversity scenario in which skills are practiced, and repeating practice of the skills.

Participants took a 10-item self-efficacy assessment immediately before and after the workshop, as well as three weeks after the workshop to gauge longer-lasting effects of the workshop on information research confidence. The self-efficacy scale, developed by the author, was designed using principles outlined by Bandura (2006).

The formation of this workshop was supported through the presenter's participation in the Institute for Research Design in Librarianship, a week-long training program followed by one year of guided mentorship to cultivate librarian-researchers.

## Average participant self-evaluation

Rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 to 100 using the given scale:

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Cannot do at all | | | | | Moderately can do | | | | | Highly certain can do |

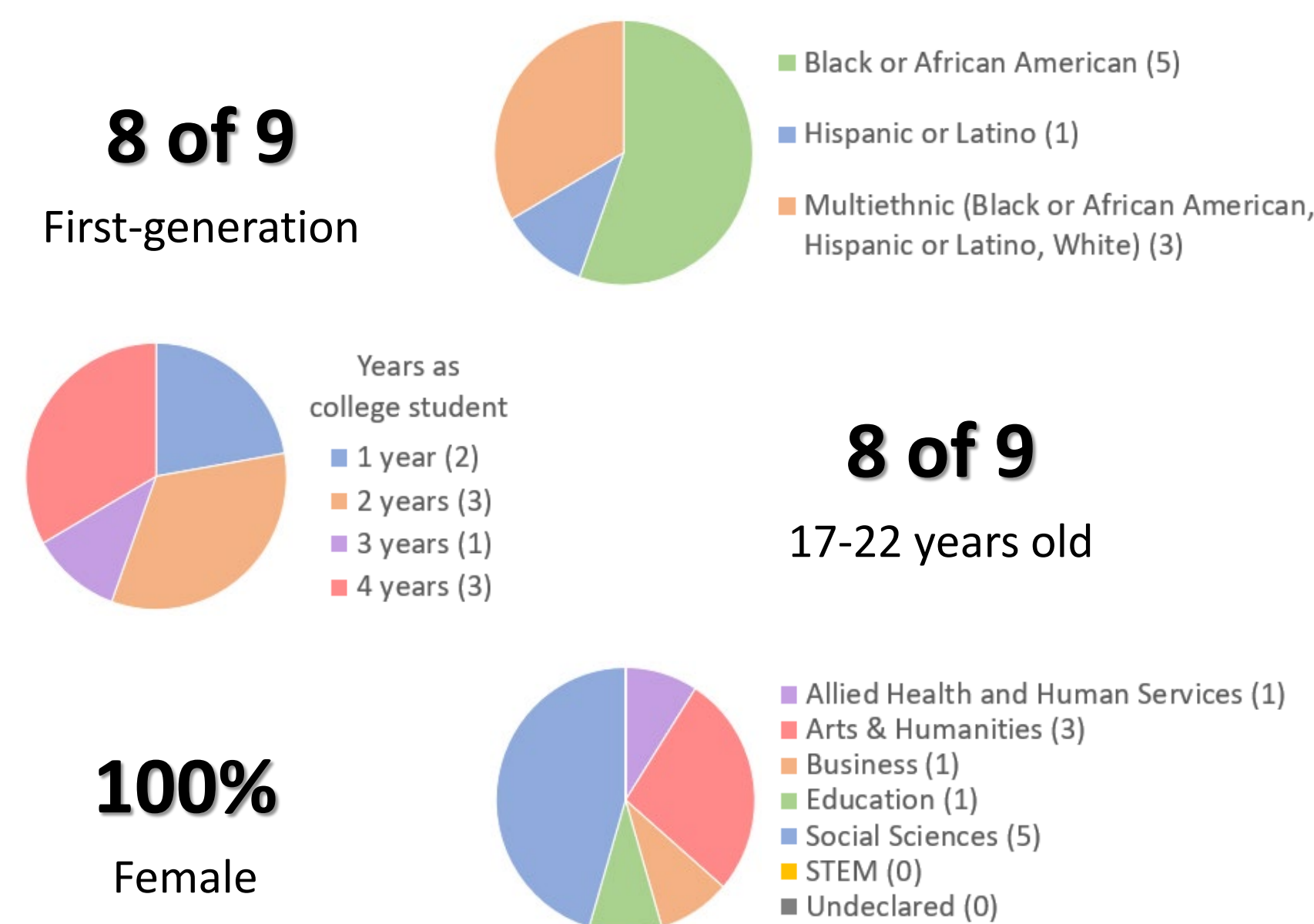| | Pre-test (n=9) | Post-test (n=9) | Follow-up (n=8) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Use the library website to search for scholarly articles | 82.1 | 97.3 | 92.8 |
| Identify appropriate article databases on the library website | 65.0 | 92.4 | 91.6 |
| Identify the most relevant words to use in searching article databases | 63.9 | 93.3 | 96.1 |
| Use an article database's Advanced Search features | 51.7 | 84.4 | 90.4 |
| Identify scholarly articles that are most useful | 69.1 | 92.2 | 94.3 |
| Understand the information within the articles | 79.4 | 88.0 | 91.8 |
| Identify *alternative words* to better focus results | 55.3 | 90.0 | +63% | 89.0 |
| Use *subject terms* to find related information | 53.7 | 88.8 | 89.4 | +66% |
| Identify *alternative article databases* | 39.2 | 80.6 | 94.9 | +142% |
| Identify whom to *ask for assistance* | 72.8 | 96.7 | +33% | 96.1 |

## What is resilience?

» *Flexibility* in approach to search
» Awareness of whom to *ask for help*

## How teach resilience?

(Forbes & Fikretoglu, 2018; Tabibnia & Radecki, 2018)

» Target a *vulnerable population*
» *Acknowledge* the skills students already possess
» Impress that *skills can be learned*
» Communicate a *belief in* the training
» *Practice* training in supported environment
» *Repeat* the practice

## Participant demographics

**8 of 9**
First-generation

- Black or African American (5)
- Hispanic or Latino (1)
- Multiethnic (Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, White) (3)

Years as college student
- 1 year (2)
- 2 years (3)
- 3 years (1)
- 4 years (3)

**8 of 9**
17-22 years old

**100%**
Female

- Allied Health and Human Services (1)
- Arts & Humanities (3)
- Business (1)
- Education (1)
- Social Sciences (5)
- STEM (0)
- Undeclared (0)

## Discussion

All participants reported higher self-efficacy scores in both the post-workshop and follow-up surveys, as compared to the pre-workshop survey. Two students reported relatively high self-efficacy scores in the pre-workshop survey; even they reported higher self-efficacy scores in the post- and follow-up surveys.

Some scores increased from the post- to follow-up survey; some modestly decreased, indicating a mix of growth and decline in research self-confidence as time elapsed from library training.

This study's primary obstacle was participant recruitment, with just nine participants. As such, comparison between the control and treatment groups was not possible. Reconsidered as a pilot project, results merit expanded study.

**Resilience training techniques, as presented in the psychological literature, can be incorporated into library sessions, and librarians are already using many of these techniques.**

➢ By teaching students a variety of approaches to searching for information, librarians encourage students to be *flexible* in their approach to the research process.

➢ By drawing students' attention to a research support network, a resource they may not be aware existed or may not have thought about in this way, librarians introduce students to an important aspect of academic and career success. Knowing when and whom to *ask for assistance* can be a vital component of completing a class, progressing toward earning a degree, and ultimately flourishing in the workplace.

➢ By using a strengths-based approach and acknowledging the skills that students bring to the IL classroom, librarians *elevate students* in their role as researcher.

➢ By building in time for students to practice searching for information during an IL session, librarians offer students the opportunity to augment their skills *in a supported environment*.

## Future Directions

- Incorporate resilience training techniques into more library instruction sessions
- Explore offering "Research with Confidence" as a TRIO workshop or with other campus groups
- Use results from this study to enable partnerships in the general education and disciplinary curricula

## References

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