When I started my undergraduate career, conducting research seemed like a daunting task, especially conducting a literature review. Last summer through my participation in the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Research Program, I had the opportunity to conduct a research study and produce a manuscript. I worked with Dr. Lucas Torres whom I had worked with as an undergraduate research assistant and through my participation in the Health Career Opportunities Program.

My research process for the McNair program started when I began brainstorming topics. My mentor researches Latinx mental health and had recently finished collecting data for an experiment on microaggressions. I considered using some of the behavioral data for my summer research project and I met with Ms. Pat Berge, who helped me identify key terms that would allow me to further investigate microaggressions. We started searching on PsychINFO, however, since microaggressions are a new area of literature, Ms. Berge encouraged to expand the search to literature on discrimination and racism. During this meeting, I learned how to create a PsychINFO account, which was extremely helpful and allowed me to save my search results and the key terms.

I utilized several psychology databases via Raynor’s website, specifically PsychINFO from Ovid, ERIC from EBSCO, Academic Search Complete, and Web of Science. In addition to searching for peer reviewed articles, Dr. Torres also encouraged me to read Dr. Derald Wing Sue’s book on Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation. Dr. Sue is one of the leading researchers on microaggressions, therefore, I checked this book out from Raynor Library which provided me with a wealth of information.

My mentor, Dr. Lucas Torres, had a lot of data that I could work with, so I decided to explore some of the other data he had collected even though I had started researching microaggressions. These SPSS databases had rich data that included measures on ethnic identity and various measures on mental health such as depressive symptoms, perceived stress, acculturative stress, and overall psychological distress.

I decided to read more about ethnic identity development, since I was not knowledgeable about this process. This transition to researching ethnic identity was a challenging because I had been focusing my searches on microaggressions and I already had several articles and a book that informed this research. However, I wanted to learn about a new topic, so I transitioned to researching ethnic identity development in Latinx populations.

There is a large body of literature on ethnic identity development and I did not know where to start. I met with Dr. Torres to discuss how ethnic identity is conceptualized from a psychological standpoint. He pointed me toward Dr. Jean Phinney’s work on ethnic identity, specifically the scale she created to quantify this developmental process, the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM).

At this point I looked up the MEIM in Google Scholar where I found the article that described the creation of this measure. It had been cited hundreds of times, and I knew this would be a foundational piece to include in the bibliography. After I read more about the MEIM, I realized it had been revised (MEIM-R), which was the measure that Dr. Torres used in his data collection. I found many more of Dr. Phinney’s articles on ethnic identity and students of color, but I decided to exclude some of these articles since they did not address the adult population I was researching.
As I learned more about ethnic identity development, I wanted to focus on a specific ethnic population. I chose to research the ethnic identity in Latinx populations for multiple reasons. I identify as a Chicana (part of Latinx population) and my mentor’s work focused on this population as well. This meant that I had to learn more about psychological research conducted with Latinx populations. I utilized MARQCATplus to search for e-books, books in print, and anthologies in order to learn more broadly about Latinx mental health. I utilized some of the following keywords: Chicano psychology, Chicano mental health, Latino psychology, Latin* mental health, Latina health, health disparities, and immigration and mental health. These word pairings allowed me to locate over a dozen books. I checked these books out and relied on the index to locate the relevant information I needed to learn about Latinx mental health.

As you may imagine, I had several dozen sources, which included scholarly articles, books, and anthologies. I found myself having to choose between sources and decided to cross check my articles on Web of Science and Google Scholar, where I could see how many times this article had been cited. Seeing that some of my articles had been cited by other researchers helped me narrow down my list of sources. I made sure to include seminal articles that introduced the constructs I was writing about. For example, I was using Dr. James Marcia’s social identity framework, so I made sure to use his original article published in 1966, *Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status*. I also selected articles that described the measures I was utilizing, specifically the Multidimensional Acculturative Stress Inventory (MASI), Brief Symptom Inventory-18 (BSI-18), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression (CES-D), and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R).

When I was writing up my discussion section and had to conduct yet another literature search, I made an appointment to meet with Ms. Leatha Miles-Edmonson a librarian. This meeting helped me identify additional articles that supported my findings. I was having a hard time explaining and supporting my nuanced findings, so I talked about this further with Ms. Miles-Edmonson. She led me use more specific terms and open my search to other scholarly journals such as Medline from Ovid.

As I found articles I saved them to my RefWorks account, which I learned about from our McNair session with Ms. Miles-Edmonson. This was another invaluable tool that facilitated my research process. I did not have to worry about saving each article I found onto my USB drive and instead I could access them online. In terms of formatting my manuscript and especially my bibliography, I utilized American Psychological Association (APA) format because it is the format used by psychologists, especially clinical psychologists who research mental health.

I learned that the research process is exciting and dynamic. Although I was certainly weary about this process, I learned about the numerous resources available to student researchers at Marquette University. I look forward to continuing to grow in my research skills as I pursue a doctoral degree in clinical psychology upon graduation. Thank you for the opportunity to apply for the Maria Dittman Research Competition.