

Filtering Out: How *Instagram* and *Snapchat* Filters Enhance Whiteness**Angela Taglione****Publication Date**

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For my first year of college in Fall 2020, I went on medical leave, and I haven't been in school since COVID ended my senior year in March 2020. When I went back to college in Spring 2022, I was nervous about writing essays and hoped it would meet the standards of a college student. This past semester I took a Multimedia Writing and Rhetoric course called, "Race and Identity in America." After the first week of class, I was nervous not just about writing well but about how I could articulate thoughts in class about a subject as provocative as this one. My first research essay was a podcast essay on race at Notre Dame, and I specifically looked at how and why black students have the lowest graduation rate. With this essay, I had to first write the essay then talk about it in a podcast-like way. This essay directly addressed the nervousness I was feeling on both writing and talking about race, but with the help of Hesburgh Library, I was able to write an essay and deliver a podcast that both my professor and peers enjoyed. For that podcast essay, I immediately went to my professor and the library help desk and asked about what techniques are offered regarding recording podcasts.

My professor, with the help of Julie Vecchio, helped me in the creation of a podcast that was research based and yet conversational. Here, the library helped to ease my anxiety about the process of writing a research essay. After this assignment, I began thinking about the final research essay for the class. I knew I wanted to write an essay on something related to social media and race, but I didn't know what. When I started looking for potential topics for my research essay it was overwhelming because each Google Scholar search contained more than three million results. However, through the help of the librarian, Willie Baer, I was able to learn how to effectively use the ND library search system (OneSearch). I learned how to navigate through the library guides and get the search results down to the hundreds and find sources that were less immense as Google Scholar. After doing some thinking, I found my topic, which was

how *Snapchat* and *Instagram* filters enhance racism and negatively affect the mental health of minorities.

When I was retaught how to access OneSearch, I thought I was set and fine to complete all my research, but with a topic as specific as mine it was difficult to find peer-reviewed articles that exactly fit the subject. Thankfully, my class attended a library visit with Willie Baer and he showed us how to modify our OneSearch results to get results that were more helpful. For example, I learned how to use “AND” and “OR” search techniques and I instantly was able to get almost a million sources down to hundreds or tens of sources. I used Willie’s suggestions about using “OR” to include any similar phrases that could have the same meaning such as “race” or “racial” or “racial identities,” etc. I used a field search “Title contains” when I wanted a specific social media platform and filters like *Snapchat* to be the main focus. Instead of getting an article about *Snapchat* or *Instagram* in general and how they affect mental health, I wanted specifically how their filter features caused poor image and enhanced whiteness.

After compiling a list of sources, I, once again, sought out a librarian to help me find even more valuable sources and learned about the “Library Guides,” which are all subject based on the library website. In particular, I found the guide on Writing and Rhetoric useful when searching through *Gale* and *EBSCOhost*. I began integrating them into my paper and realized in my Writing and Rhetoric class how the information I found was just meant to support and highlight my thoughts and not overpower my voice. I had not been taught how to properly integrate sources before, and this was a significant change that helped my paper have a strong position that adds to the conversation instead of restating other opinions.

In order to focus on my paper, the library environment played a crucial role. I spent hours writing in the library and the study rooms with my friends to finish the eight pages on time. After

the paper was written I had to prepare a presentation for my essay, “Filtering Out: How *Instagram* and *Snapchat* Filters Enhance Whiteness,” so I utilized the study rooms again. I practiced my presentation at least ten times which would’ve annoyed more than just my friends had we not had access to a study room. The study room was also helpful for me to have a quiet space where I could recite my presentation without too much noise. I am very anxious about public speaking so it was extremely helpful to have a place where I could easily practice.

The library resources helped me gain a better understanding on how to approach research projects. I feel more confident using the library resources in the future now that I have been introduced to them and recognize their importance in the research process. Without the library resources, I would have been very disorganized trying to obtain peer-reviewed sources that fit my specific topic of interest. I hope to continue to take advantage of these resources in my future research at Notre Dame. Thank you for your consideration of me for this award.