Research: A Growing Process

Writing and learning are processes which go hand in hand. When I write, I must sit down with knowledge of my subject. If I lack that knowledge then I must look the information up. I am learning. The Bankier Library of Brookdale Community College is an excellent place to learn and find information. When I wrote my final essay in Professor Robert McGovern's online English Research and Writing class, I relied heavily on the Bankier Library online database resources. I learned techniques for finding sources in the databases and I also learned techniques for eliminating sources in my research and writing process. I have grown in my knowledge and research abilities writing this essay. I have not only learned and perfected techniques, I have matured and grown in my thinking as well.

I chose mandating vaccines, a growing controversy, as the subject of my essay. The assignment was to choose a current controversial issue. Vaccination is a current and very controversial topic, in which I have interest. I did not have previous experience with online databases or advanced academic researching prior to this course. Before I even began researching for this essay, I spoke to our family chiropractor, also a life time friend, Dr. Anthony DeMarco. He provides information on vaccinations and their effects so that his patients can make an informed decision about vaccination. Barbara Loe Fisher's book, *Vaccines, Autism and Chronic Inflammation: The New Epidemic*, which he lent me was very helpful. I borrowed the video sited in my paper from him as well. A conversation with Dr. DeMarco along with the reports he lent, helped me determine the key points of my paper. I still experienced difficulty
finding good sources. I knew ahead of time that I must avoid articles that were outdated or biased. With that in mind I was able to eliminate many articles initially, but I still had trouble finding the right sources which were related to my topic. I had to try many different keywords until I finally started obtaining results.

Keywords are very important; they are the key to online research. I found many results when I tried the keywords "vaccines" or "vaccinations," but they were too vague and I was not getting any specific results. Instead I started modifying my keyword to "mandating vaccines," which helped me find some results, but I was still getting many negative ones. As I read through some of the articles, I found other words to use such as "herd immunity," "vaccine theory," and even "vaccine mandate." With more specified approaches I discovered better results. Depending on which database I used, I would get results for other countries besides the United States. I had to make sure I was searching properly to find sources which related to the vaccine issue in America. Through my many trials, I found that I had to say the same thing multiple ways until I finally discovered positive results.

I also found that it was important to carefully read each source instead of assuming it would be appropriate for the paper. One New York Times article I found on LexisNexis was about vaccine mandates, but after looking it over well I realized that it was not appropriate for my paper. Reading sources more than once helped even more, not only for eliminating, but for leading me to other sources. Reading the articles about mandating the Gardasil vaccine, lead me to the Gardasil website, which is very deceiving since it avoids the adverse effects Gardasil has had on many girls and young women. Fisher's book lead me to the first amendment which clearly outlines America's freedom to choose whether or not to vaccinate. Writing down the basic idea of the article I intended to use also helped me pull the prickles from the wool. I had to understand
what the article itself was saying. Taking notes and highlighting the points related to my topic was an important process and tool for writing this essay.

As my essay progressed, sources were eliminated or added. By cutting down my essay to what was most important I was able to truly find the right sources. The article, “Mandating Vaccination: What Counts as a ‘Mandate’ in Public Health and When They Should Be Used?”, by Matthew K. Wynia which I found on Academic Search Premier helped me understand mandates and why and when they are used. This article assisted me further in making my decision on the issue of vaccine mandates. As I researched I learned not only more about vaccines, I also learned about America’s laws and rights and the rights of people as individuals. I found many things very appalling especially the disregard for the individual, which is key to the vaccine theory of herd immunization. When I used a contradictory source to show the opposing side of my argument, I chose one that was unbiased and current. I then refuted it with not only my own words, but with another source. Finding the right sources is not the only issue when writing a research essay, using them correctly is essential. Research is a constant process. I was amazed at how much I learned about my subject. I was also amazed at how researching started to become a second nature. I felt as if I had conquered the beast, the hunted prey, the source. I knew how to approach the precipice, the keyword search, and if my initial methods did not work I had other ones available. I no longer slid down the side of the mountain, I held on.

By holding on and pulling through this class and this essay in particular, I have grown as a researcher. I am open minded when looking at a source and know to avoid that which is biased or outdated. I know where to look for sources at the Bankier Library. I can handle online databases and know techniques for finding and eliminating sources. These researching techniques are now embedded in my mind. As a scholar I have also grown. I gained a substantial
amount of knowledge about my topic, vaccines. I studied their uses and abuses. I understand more about my country, its laws and policies, and its people. I can see how abusive vaccination policies are eating away at America’s freedoms. After looking at both sides of the issue of mandatory vaccinations, I am able to make a rational and unbiased judgment which is what must be done in all studies.

Studying, learning, researching, and writing are all connected. English-122 with Professor McGovern was a challenging course. Of all the assignments, I must say that the final essay was the most difficult to write and involved the most research. With each paper and exercise in the course I learned more about researching and writing, but I mastered my researching and writing skills with this final essay. Through the research I did, I learned an immense amount about vaccines and how they are used in the United States. Researching and writing this essay was a growing experience. I have grown and matured as not only a researcher and scholar, but as a writer and person as well.