**Literature Search Brainstorming Activity**

**GOAL:**
The goal of this exercise is not necessarily to help you develop your research topic. (But if it does, then great!) The aim is to help you figure out where your topic fits within the scholarly conversation in the literature.

In order to properly write a literature review, you don't simply summarize other research – you *engage* with it. And you can’t engage fully unless you’ve read and understand what else has been discovered on your topic. This activity is a first step in that process.

**INSTRUCTIONS:**
If you’re with a partner: Take 5 minutes each to explain your research topic to your partner and share your research questions and any sources (articles, books, etc.) that you've already found.

Now spend about 10 minutes each brainstorming what other sources might be appropriate to fully answer the research questions. Try to think of what areas, sub-disciplines, and topics cover the full scope of the scholarly conversation on this research topic. Remember the old saying – there are no bad ideas in brainstorming. (See my example on the other side – I didn’t hold anything back!)

Out of this brainstorm, create a list of databases and search terms to aid you in finding the scholarly conversation. (Tip: Don’t forget about books, both electronic and print, and the library catalog!)
Gina’s Example

Topic: Reasons why people choose complimentary and alternative medicine (CAM) instead of traditional Western medicine.

Questions:

- Do people choose CAM because they had bad experiences with Western doctors and the health care system?
  - Is it cost? Is it because the American health care system is emotionally draining and complicated to navigate? Is it because Western methods have not worked?
- Do people who choose CAM prefer it because it is holistic and acknowledges emotional/spiritual health and wellbeing?
  - Does religious belief play a role?

Areas to explore:

- Sociology of medicine – general
- History of CAM, stats on use
- Psychology of bad experiences in health care
- Role of religion/spirituality in medical care
- “Patient choice” and the role it plays
- Personal testimonies
- The placebo effect
- Science of CAM – why or why not are there studies on CAM’s effectiveness, how do studies affect people choosing CAM (or not choosing it)?
- Is there a bias against CAM among health care practitioners?
- Reasons for distrust of Western doctors – are there differences in demographics (age, gender, income level, etc.)?
- Cost comparisons between CAM and Western medicine

Databases:

- Sociology: ProQuest Social Science suite (includes Sociological Abstracts), SOCIndex
- Psychology: EBSCO PsycINFO, PsycARTILCES
- Medicine: PubMed
- General: Academic Search Premier, Web of Science, Google Scholar
- OneSearch & WorldCat library catalogs

Keywords:

- “patient choice”
- “alternative OR holistic OR complementary OR Eastern” medicine
- “distrust” AND “doctor*”
- “placebo effect” AND “alternative medicine”
- “emotion*” AND “effectiveness” AND “health care”