INF 200: Research Methods – Sample assignments

Assignment #1 – Identifying a research problem

http://www.csupomona.edu/~jlkorey/POWERMUTT/Topics/research_design.html

As we have read, Korey (2013) explains in chapter 2 that the first step in the research process is to identify a problem and justify choosing the problem. For this assignment, you should choose a problem that you hope to solve, why you are interested in solving it, and why you believe it is important. This assignment should be about 500 words in length and should answer the following guiding questions, which were provided by Korey, in essay format:

1. What interests you about this topic? Does this topic appeal to any of your values?
2. How would the solution to this problem aid in advancing the field of information science? Which parts of the field of information science would it most affect? Would it help to clarify any major current debates?
3. How would the solution to the problem affect society? Could it change any societal values?
4. Is it feasible to find an answer to this problem? If it appears to be not feasible, try to refine the problem so it is feasible.

Assignment #2 – The Literature Review

As we have read, Korey (2013) explains in chapter 2 that after you have identified a problem that you think is important, you should become familiar with the existing work in the area of the problem. This way you can build on, extend, or correct the findings that have already worked toward finding a solution to your problem. For this assignment, you should summarize a review of the existing literature related to your problem that was identified in assignment #1 and explain how you conducted this review. This assignment should be about 500 words in length and should answer the following guiding questions in essay format:

1. What are the major theories that are related to this problem?
2. Are there any findings in other studies that can be built on?
3. Do you see any major gaps in the existing literature that should be “filled in”?
4. Are there any findings in other studies that appear to be contradictory to your intuition?
5. What approaches did you use to research the literature? Why did you choose this approach? Make sure to include at least one library database (see http://library.albany.edu/db/) in your searches and explain why that database was chosen.
Assignment #3- Creating a hypothesis and refining the research question

At the heart of your research there is a research question which outlines what you hope to answer. This question is usually answered by testing hypothesis or several hypotheses. As we have read, Korey (2013) explains in chapter 2 that after you have reviewed the literature pertinent to the problem you wish to solve, you need to develop a hypothesis that states a relationship that you wish to test. Now that we have a solid foundation to build on from the literature review in assignment #2, it is time to refine our research question and develop hypotheses to answer the question. In a 500 word essay, please provide a refined research question and 1-3 hypotheses that would answer your question. Make sure to include how you would test the hypothesis by clearly outlining what the variables are and how they would be operationalized.

Assignment #….. – Interviews and focus groups

As we have learned, two very effective ways to collect data would be to use either an interview or a focus group. The goal of this assignment is to create a 250+ word essay which outlines how you would conduct an interview or focus group to help answer your research question. Please use the following questions as guidance:

1. Would it be more appropriate to use a focus group or an interview for your project and why?
2. What information would you hope to collect from this process?
3. Who would your population be?
4. How could you “recruit” your population?
5. What are some of the guiding questions you may ask (please list in an appendix)?

Assignment #….. – Visualizing the data

As the saying goes….A picture paints a thousand words. A spinoff of that saying becomes of particular interest for this class….A chart is worth a thousand words….or….A graph is worth a thousand words. For this assignment we will take some secondary data and create several charts and graphs to try to tell a story about the phenomena in which the data are referring too. Attached is a .csv file of demographic information from the 2000 census on Albany, Buffalo, and Syracuse.

Your task: You work for the Unified City Improvement Organization and have been tasked to determine and present to the CEO which of the two cities (see below) is in more need of stimulus money to help revive the local economy. Using either Microsoft Excel or SPSS, create a graph, chart, histogram, etc. (you choose which would be best) that answers the questions listed below by comparing two of the cities (see below for city assignment).

You should write a brief paragraph interpreting the graph, chart, etc. below each one, however, the chart or graph should clearly explain the story enough so a busy person (me the CEO) would not need to
read through your description to understand what is going on. Be prepared to share and discuss with the class.

1. How does the age structure of the cities differ?
2. How does the age structure by gender of the cities differ?
3. How does the income structure of the cities differ?
4. How does the income structure by race differ?
5. How does the housing situation differ between the cities?

City Assignment:

Albany and Buffalo: Last name begins with A-H
Albany and Syracuse: Last name begins with I-P
Buffalo and Syracuse: Last name begins with Q-Z