Assignment 2: Assessing the Explanatory Power of the Body of Knowledge

This is a three-part exercise that I hope will help you complete Assignment 2 quickly and successfully. The first task in this exercise is to examine and identify the characteristics of research papers in the literature that focus on a ***specific broad or theoretical research question of concern determined by the group as a whole.*** The second task is to identify the commonalities among the articles selected by the group (18 to 24 articles), with a focus on design considerations. The third task is to assess the contributions to the body of knowledge relevant to the research question that is the focus or your work – strengths and weaknesses from the perspective of internal and external validity and explanatory power. This is your assessment of the rigor and merit of the body of knowledge represented in the literature you reviewed.

Part 1: Individual Submissions of Descriptions of Design Features of Four Articles

Step 1: ***As a group, select any one*** of the articles on the list Articles for Exercises & Assignments *except the articles used for Assignment 2.* Make your selection with care because the topical focus of this article and more explicitly the ***broad research question addressed in the report*** will be the basis for your further exploration of the literature. The four articles that each of you select should address this broad or general question,

Step 2: Each member of your team will then select ***two articles*** *from the references cited in the seed article.* ***No two people can use the same article.***

Step 3: Each member of your team selects ***two articles*** from the references in each of the two articles s/he selected in Step 2. You should have a ***total of six articles*** at this point.

Submit a document per the instructions below on the Week 13 Discussion Board before class meeting time on April 06. This is ONE document for all 6 articles. Label the document Assignment2_Part 1_YourLastName. You can save a lot of time by sharing your documents well before class. If all team members review the documents before class, I think you can finish this entire exercise in class and be all done with it.

Provide this information for each of the 4 articles.
1. Full citation.
2. The abstract (copy & paste is fine)
3. Statement of the overall research question (in your own words)
4. A brief description of the sampling protocol to include target population, type of sample, and size of sample. Be as explicit as possible about the type of sample, such as "proportional random sample of students in public elementary schools in Broward County, FL."
5. Indicate the type of design used: (1) true experiment, (2) quasi-experiment, (3) cross-sectional, (4) longitudinal, and (5) exploratory case study, (6) explanatory case study. Be explicit about the design – such as "cross-sectional design with three comparison populations, data collected at one point in time" or "cross-sectional design, single population, random samples at two points in time." Base your observations on the characteristics of the groups that we have discussed in terms of effect on the internal and external validity and explanatory power. The added detail will make completing Part 2 of this exercise in class *much* easier.

Part 2: Group Submission of Structure, Characteristics and Content of Published Research in the Topical Area Your Group Chose

6. Your task **as a group** is to determine the overall structure and content of published research in the topical area you chose for this exercise. Consider all articles as you respond to these prompts. ***Label the document Assignment2_Part2_ Last_Names_Alphabetical_Order. ONE*** team member should submit the document on Canvas (Assignments, Exercise 3). **I encourage a bullet-list approach to answering these questions.**

7. Based on *all of the articles reviewed,* what are the key overall research questions addressed in this body of literature? I would anticipate that your team focused on two or three overall research questions or topics. Make a list.

8. Describe the overall characteristics of research design (such as type of design, sampling approach, and nature of data analysis) embodied in the reports, including the degree to which the research questions are both similar enough to create a shared body of knowledge *and distinct enough* to contribute to a growing body of knowledge. Look at the more detailed descriptions of the design provided when you answered Q5 in Part 1. See if there are commonalities. Make these descriptions based on ALL of the key factors in research design that we have studied (what constitutes a good question, hypotheses, sampling, design, and analysis).

9. Indicate which of these attributes of the articles *as a whole, as a body of research focusing on one or two specific research questions (topics),* have strengths and weaknesses ***based on research design considerations. Focus on those that will most greatly affect our understanding of the phenomena (expand or perhaps restrict knowledge).*** I recommend that you make a list of bullet points. For example, you may find little or no use of experimental designs, which would mean that researchers can only rarely draw conclusions about *direct cause and effect*. You may find many cross-sectional studies using a large sample size, a strength because a larger sample size *generally (not always by a long shot)* has a positive impact on external validity. Submit a **500 word statement** of the potential impacts of the design choices made by the authors on the overall breadth, rigor, and contributions to the body of knowledge made by these authors. [The word count for Q. 1, 2 and 3 is 333 words.]

Part 3: Assessing the Value of the Contributions to the Body of Knowledge

10. Provide an analysis (***maximum of 1000 words***) of the key conclusions these authors reached – for research, for practice, or for policy. State the major contributions to the body of knowledge about your selected research topic. These are the ***conclusions the authors reach (not your conclusions).*** Remember that *failing to reach any conclusion* is a weakness in and of itself. Make your analysis on the basis of internal validity, external validity, and explanatory power of the conclusions as a whole that you state.