

## Sample Exercise for Project 3: Research Summary

### Creating Research Questions and Choosing the Right Method

#### **For instructors**

The goal of this exercise is to help model the process of moving from a problem to a research question and then utilizing the best kinds of sources to help answer that research question. The exercise begins with an open discussion of a sample problem. You can present the sample below (parking problem at USF) or discuss one of your own research projects. Present this material in any format that you see fit (group discussion, powerpoint, handout, etc.)

Example:

Sample Problem: Parking at USF

I. Memo category: Background information

Sample Research Question: "How frequently is parking/traffic labeled as a problem among similarly sized American universities?"

Types of sources: national news outlets, national surveys, etc.

II. Memo category: Explain the Problem

Sample Research Question: "What is the scope of the parking problem at USF?" or "Are there enough viable alternatives to get to campus without parking a personal vehicle at USF?"

Types of sources: USF newspaper, USF parking and transportation reports, official documentation from USF

III. Memo category: Causes of the Problem

Sample Research Question: "Are there enough parking spots?"

Types of sources: USF newspaper, USF parking and transportation reports, official documentation from USF

IV. Memo category: Impacted Populations

Sample Research Question: "How does the lack of parking bear consequences for different groups of people at USF?"

Types of sources: Individual interviews, surveys of multiple USF groups

After the discussion, students will apply what they learned from the exemplar to their own work. Ask students to write four research questions based on the problem they are researching for the Research Summary. Each of these four questions should correspond to the categories required in the Research Summary memo (background information, explanation of the problem, causes of the problem, and impacted populations). Once they have four questions, they will select appropriate types of sources to begin accruing data useful in answering those questions. After they have completed this, they can workshop with a classmate or participate in a class discussion.

### **For Students**

Effective research demands that you ask the right questions AND select the best ways to answer those questions. This exercise is designed to help you think about your problem in terms of research questions and specific sources that can help you answer those questions.

Using each of the categories to be included in your final Research Summary as a guide, we'll explore how to craft multiple research questions about a single problem and address ways to answer those questions.

[Present Model]

Now that you've practiced creating research questions and selecting sources to best answer the questions, try to write four research questions to help you solve your own chosen problem. Each question should correspond to the four categories discussed above (background information, explanation of the problem, causes of the problem, and impacted population). Once you've written the question, write down what kinds of sources or information you would need to help answer it.

When you finish, trade papers with a classmate and review each other's work.

- Do you think their questions help them better understand the multiple components of their larger problem?
- Do their sources match their questions?
- Do any of the types of sources they've named apply to your questions?