Basics of Research Methods

for Criminal Justice & Criminology

FOURTH EDITION

Michael G. Maxfield • Earl R. Babbie

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Earl R. Babbie graduated from Harvard University before enlisting in the U.S. Marine Corps. He received his PhD from the University of California–Berkeley, and began teaching shortly thereafter. Credited with defining research methods for the social sciences, Dr. Babbie has written several texts, including the bestselling *The Practice of Social Research*.

To Max Jacob Fauth and Laine Ellen Fauth
To Suzanne Babbie

Contents

Preface

Since the first edition of *Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology* (*RMCJC*) was published in 1995, we have been delighted to hear comments from instructors who have used the text—and from a few who do not use it! Although it is always gratifying to learn of positive reactions, we have also listened to suggestions for revising the book through its seven editions. Some colleagues suggested trimming the text substantially to focus on the most important principles of research methods in criminal justice. Students and instructors are also increasingly sensitive to the cost of college texts.

As a result, we introduced *Basics of Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology* about eight years ago. Our objective in producing that text was fivefold: (1) retain the key elements of the parent text; (2) concentrate on fundamental principles of research design; (3) appeal to a broad variety of teaching and learning styles; (4) retain salient examples that illustrate various methods; and (5) reduce less-central points of elaboration and the examples used to illustrate them. That proved to be more challenging than we initially thought. At one point, we were tempted to do something simple like drop two chapters, wrap the result in a soft cover, and declare what was left to be the basics. Fortunately that sentiment was reined in, and we pursued a more deliberate approach that involved planning from the ground up.

Basics is shorter, more concise, and focused on what we believe is the most central material for introductory courses in research methods. Rather than simply offering a truncated version of the full text, *Basics* has been crafted to appeal to those seeking a more economical alternative while retaining the big book's highly successful formula. Many instructors teaching shorter courses, or courses where students are better served by concentrating on basic principles of criminal justice research, have used the *Basics* edition. Others, especially instructors teaching introductory graduate courses, prefer the more extensive coverage offered in *RMCJC*.

Goals and Objectives

Criminal justice has always been a fascinating topic for students, partly because it is the stuff of news stories, fiction, and much popular entertainment. Criminal

justice research goes behind and beyond the headlines to address important questions of *who*, *what*, *why*, and *how*. *Who* is involved as offender, victim, and justice professional? *What* are the nature and frequency of different kinds of crime and disorder problems, and what new problems are emerging? *Why* are incidents happening in particular places, and why are offenders involved in particular patterns of behavior? *How* are different kinds of offenses committed? *How* should justice agencies prevent and respond to problems of crime and safety?

Our primary goal in writing this edition is unchanged: to help students learn how to conduct research to answer these and related questions. Toward that end, certain principles have guided our revision of each edition of the text. Our intent is to:

- provide a careful description of the varied options for doing research in criminal justice.
- clarify and demystify what is traditionally a difficult subject for students at all levels.
- illustrate research methods with examples that are informative and interesting.
- incorporate new approaches that reflect methodological developments in the field.
- emphasize the application of criminal justice research to real-world problems and justice policy examples.
- bridge the gap between authors, instructors, and students by drawing on examples of our own research, especially research conducted with student colleagues.

Organization of the Text

The fourth edition of *Basics of Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology* has 11 chapters, although chapter topics have changed slightly:

- Chapter 1, "An Introduction to Criminal Justice Inquiry," introduces research methods. Material in this chapter describes how social scientific inquiry differs from other ways of learning things. This chapter also advises students on how to select research topics, conduct a literature review, evaluate different kinds of Internet resources, and write a research proposal.
- Chapter 2, "Ethics and Criminal Justice Research," examines how research has the potential to harm subjects and the obligations of researchers to minimize the risk of such harm. Examples illustrate the range of ethical issues in justice research and the steps researchers take to address them.
- Chapter 3, "General Issues in Research Design," describes basic features of all research studies that have to be considered when planning a research project. These include causation, the time dimension, and different fundamental avenues for criminal justice inquiry.
- Chapter 4, "Concepts, Operationalization, and Measurement," considers these central topics. All research requires some sort of measurement, and this chapter examines its key elements. As an in-depth example of measurement, we describe different approaches to measuring crime—a fundamental dependent and independent variable in criminal justice research.
- Chapter 5, "Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs," examines how to plan research that has explanatory purposes. Research design involves a collection of building blocks that can be combined in different ways. We emphasize the flexibility of research designs, drawing on interesting and creative examples.

- Chapter 6, "Sampling," describes approaches to selecting subjects for research. We cover the two general categories of probability and nonprobability sampling, describing different subtypes in each category. The basics of probability theory are introduced as key principles underlying sampling and statistical significance.
- Chapter 7, "Survey Research," explores traditional survey research and other types of interviewing. Changes in technology continue to affect how surveys are conducted.
- Chapter 8, "Qualitative Interviewing," is new to this edition. The chapter describes different applications of qualitative and specialized interviewing. Earl and I are pleased that Amber Horning has joined us in writing this chapter, drawing on her own work and research by others to examine this family of data-gathering techniques.
- Chapter 9, "Field Observation," includes discussion of traditional approaches as well as more structured environmental surveys and related techniques. Examples illustrate the use of different approaches.
- Chapter 10, "Agency Records, Content Analysis, and Secondary Data," covers data extracted from administrative records as well as data series regularly collected by researchers and government agencies. Examples illustrate the wide range of research opportunities supported by data from different secondary sources.
- Chapter 11, "Evaluation Research and Problem Analysis," focuses on applied research that aims to improve criminal justice policy and practice. The chapter describes how problem analysis is increasingly used in justice agencies to reduce crime and related problems.

What's New in This Edition

In preparing this fourth edition, we stayed with what has proved to be a popular formula. But we have also responded to suggestions from several people—reviewers, colleagues, and instructors—who used earlier editions.

Qualitative Research

Many reviewers and instructors who use the book have suggested expanding coverage of qualitative research techniques. Although we have always included qualitative methods in our discussion of how to do research, a new chapter offers more depth in specialized interviewing and related field techniques. With contributions from Amber Horning, a PhD student at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, we present a new chapter on qualitative interviewing. Amber draws heavily on her own research studying pimps and other sex workers, mostly in New York City. Her work is fascinating and creative, offering excellent examples of how to do field work on sensitive topics with elusive subjects.

Amber's contributions also supplement our discussion of focus groups in criminological research, a topic Earl and I previously included in the chapter on survey research. What results is a new chapter that provides especially useful insights in doing field research on people engaged in illegal activities. Amber Horning's work also illustrates creative approaches to sampling and learning about hidden populations.

We are pleased that Amber Horning has joined us for this edition for many reasons. Among these is our continuing effort to include examples of student

research. Amber's work involves extensive field presence in an urban environment; we feel she has conveyed much of that experience very nicely.

Opening Vignettes

A reviewer noted that the opening box, "Home Detention," in Chapter 1 was especially helpful in framing topics to be covered in the chapter. We agreed and have added similar boxes as chapter-opening vignettes. Some of these draw on recent research by former colleague Ronald Clarke and me, collaborating with graduate students at Rutgers University. Other opening vignettes describe research by former students or research on topics of recent popular interest. We have linked these with chapter themes and tried to add timely topics that will interest students.

The vignettes can be points of departure for class discussion. For example, the opening vignette in Chapter 3 applies criminal justice theory to the important applied topic of serial sex offenders. We especially like this example because it shows the very practical application of *theory*, something students sometimes assume is irrelevant, to an issue that receives much media attention at the expense of analytic thinking.

Expanded Examples of Student Research

Reviewers and colleagues have often commented on the use of examples from student research in earlier editions and in the larger text. We have included more of these throughout the book, many in featured boxes.

Highlighting student research serves different purposes. First, it amplifies what some colleagues call the "over-the-shoulder" tone of the text, in which readers feel they are experiencing more than just words on a printed page. Second, student research examples embody the kind of collaborative supervision that exists between students and faculty. Third, we have great familiarity with the details of work by our students. Such details are rarely described in published articles, and being able to report them adds behind-the-scenes information not readily available elsewhere. Finally, Earl and I believe the examples presented here are topical and inherently interesting to readers. Among the new examples in this edition are projects that address pimps and other sex workers, terrorism, sex offenders, auto theft, and an evaluation of a Cure Violence project in New York City.

Interpreting Data

Previous editions included a chapter on data analysis. The chapter's focus was always conceptual, introducing students to descriptive and inferential statistics, but focusing on the logic of data analysis. We have since learned that many instructors did not assign the chapter, largely because the requirements for criminal justice majors at most colleges and universities include separate courses on research design and statistics. As a result, and to make room for the new chapter on qualitative techniques, the chapter on interpreting data was dropped from this edition.

We have also made a variety of changes in each chapter:

- **Chapter 1** was extensively revised in the previous edition to provide an overview of criminal justice research the way it is commonly taught. This has been well received. On the advice of reviewers, we added material on how to evaluate the quality of information presented on different kinds of web pages.

- **Chapter 2** includes some new examples and updated material on working with offenders. Amber Horning's research on the ethical challenges of studying active pimps offers an excellent example of the special problems that criminal justice researchers sometimes face.
- **Chapter 3** expands discussion of qualitative and quantitative data. Following a reviewer's suggestion, we added material on units of analysis and the ecological fallacy. We also added a figure to illustrate inductive and deductive reasoning.
- **Chapter 4** adds a figure to illustrate levels of measurement, in response to a reviewer's suggestion. Discussion of the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) is updated. We also offer a new example to illustrate criterion validity.
- **Chapter 5** begins with a vignette describing an experimental study of phishing. This experiment has generated quite a lot of interest in the ethics of online research. We've added a new example of a double-blind experiment in a correctional setting.
- **Chapter 6** expands discussion of snowball sampling, stemming from the new qualitative interviewing chapter.
- **Chapter 7** adds new examples, and updates information on the diminished use of telephone surveys. Other material was reorganized or deleted to reflect the revised treatment of qualitative interviews.
- **Chapter 8**, "Qualitative Interviewing," is new to this edition.
- **Chapter 9** includes several new examples of field observation and field research. Two of these, counting homeless and studying neighborhood conditions, illustrate ways to enhance the reliability of field observations. A box by former John Jay student Sheyla Delgado, writing with colleague Jeffrey Butts, describes creative approaches to sampling street populations and conducting field interviews.
- **Chapter 10** presents a new example of online data analysis using secondary data. We also followed suggestions from reviewers to expand discussion of the advantages of secondary data. The introductory vignette describes content analysis of terrorist recruitment materials seized by police in Turkey.
- **Chapter 11** briefly introduces evidence generation as a new type of applied research. This reflects my work with community-based organizations in New York City. Tinus Kruger contributes a fascinating new box on community-based crime analysis in South Africa. This illustrates how analytic techniques and mapping can be used in large undocumented settlements.

Learning Tools

Online Instructor's Manual

The instructor's manual contains a variety of resources to aid instructors in preparing and presenting text material in a manner that meets their personal preferences and course needs. It presents chapter-by-chapter suggestions and resources to enhance and facilitate learning.

Online Test Bank

The Test Bank contains multiple-choice and essay questions to challenge your students and assess their learning.

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero

The Test Bank also is available through Cognero, a flexible, online system that allows you to author, edit, and manage test bank content as well as create multiple test versions in an instant. You can deliver tests from your school's learning management system, your classroom, or wherever you want.

Online PowerPoints

These vibrant, Microsoft PowerPoint lecture slides for each chapter assist you with your lecture by providing concept coverage using images, figures, and tables directly from the textbook!

Acknowledgments

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With my move to John Jay College in 2010, I have enjoyed contributions and suggestions from new students: Amber Horning, Michelle Cubellis, Sheyla Delgado, Dr. Brittany Hayes (Sam Houston State University), Alana Henninger, Leonid Lantsman (U.S. Department of State), Cynthia-Lee Maragh, Dr. Bryce Peterson (Urban Institute), and Julie Viollaz. Special thanks to Dr. Jeffrey Butts, Director of the Research and Evaluation Center at John Jay College, for being a gracious colleague and host.

Finally, Earl and I are very grateful for the patient, professional assistance from developmental editor Wendy Langerud (S4Carlisle Publishing Services), production manager Anne Talvacchio (Cenveo Publisher Services), and the professionals at Cengage: Carolyn Henderson Meier, Christy Frame, and the entire book team.

Mike Maxfield

PART 1

An Introduction to Criminal Justice Inquiry

What comes to mind when you encounter the word *science*? What do you think of when we describe criminal justice as a social science? For some people, science is mathematics; for others, it is white coats and laboratories. Some confuse it with technology or equate it with difficult courses in high school or college.

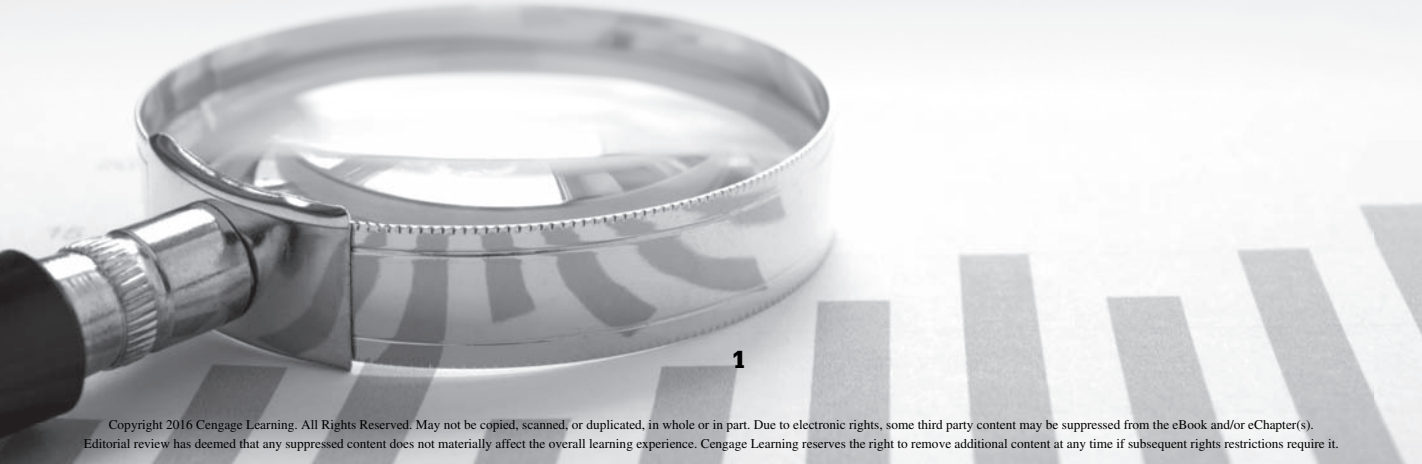
Science is, of course, none of these things per se, but it is difficult to specify exactly what science is. Scientists, in fact, disagree on the proper definition. Some object to the whole idea of social science; others question more specifically whether criminal justice can be a social science.

For the purposes of this book, we view science as a method of inquiry—a way of learning and knowing things about the world around us. Like other ways of learning and knowing about the world, science has some special characteristics. We'll examine these traits in this opening set of chapters. We'll also see how the scientific method of inquiry can be applied to the study of crime and criminal justice.

Part 1 lays the groundwork for the rest of the book by examining the fundamental characteristics and issues that make science different from other ways of knowing things. Chapter 1 begins with a look at native human inquiry, the sort of thing all of us have been doing all our lives. We'll also consider research purposes and the basics of how to design a research project.

Chapter 2 considers the ethics of social science research. The study of crime and criminal justice often presents special challenges with regard to ethics. We'll see that most ethical questions are rooted in two fundamental principles: (1) research subjects should not be harmed, and (2) their participation must be voluntary.

The overall purpose of Part One, therefore, is to construct a backdrop against which to view more specific aspects of research design and execution. By the time you complete the chapters in Part One, you will be ready to look at some of the more concrete aspects of criminal justice research.



CHAPTER 1

Criminal Justice and Scientific Inquiry

People learn about their world through a variety of methods, and they often make mistakes along the way. Science is different from other ways of learning and knowing. We'll consider errors people commonly make and how science tries to avoid them, different purposes of research, and principles for designing a research project.

Sexual Assault in Jails and Prisons

Responding to reports of sexual assault in prisons and jails, the Prison Rape Elimination Act became law in 2003. The act enhanced penalties for sexual violence in most detention facilities and required the Department of Justice to collect systematic data on the problem. The newspaper article, "County Misreports Data about Sexual Violence in Juvenile Jails," is an example of how sexual assault continues to be a problem in San Diego, California (Maass 2012). Researchers have conducted studies to better understand the problem and assess ways to reduce sexual violence.

Allen Beck and associates (2013) describe data collected from a sample of prisons and jails by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. They report that 4 percent of prison inmates and 3.2 percent of jail inmates were victims of sexual assault in the previous 12 months or since being admitted to the facility. Projecting those percentages to all prisons and jails nationwide produces an estimate of 88,500 adult victims. In addition, the researchers report that about 2.4 percent of prison inmates and 1.8 percent of those in jail had sexual contact with facility staff, often willingly.

Nancy La Vigne and other researchers from the Urban Institute (2011) describe their research on how to prevent sexual assault in jails. Working with three facilities, they described efforts to improve supervision of inmates and corrections officers, install surveillance cameras, and train corrections officers in crisis intervention. Based on their evaluation, La Vigne and associates recommended that jail administrators use a systematic process to assess problems in specific facilities, design changes that address those problems, and collect data to assess the effects of the new actions.

This example illustrates how researchers take steps to better understand the scope of a problem and then try different approaches to reduce it. The Urban Institute analysts went one step further in their efforts to train corrections officials to do their own applied research. Jail managers were consumers of research produced by La Vigne and associates and gained some of the skills needed to become producers of applied studies in their own facilities.

Introduction

Criminal justice professionals are both consumers and producers of research.

Spending a semester studying criminal justice research methodology may not be high on your list of "Fun Things to Do." Perhaps you are, or plan to be, a criminal justice professional, and you are thinking, "Why do I have to study research methods? When I graduate, I'll be working in probation (or law enforcement, or corrections, or court services), not conducting research! I would benefit more from learning about probation counseling (or police management, or corrections policy, or youth counseling)." Fair enough. But as a criminal justice professional or service provider, you will need to be a consumer of research. One objective of this book is to help you become an informed consumer of research.

For example, in the section "Two Realities," we will see how findings from one of the first experimental studies of policing appeared to contradict a traditional tenet of law enforcement—that a visible patrol force prevents crime. Acting as a consumer of research findings, a police officer, supervisor, or executive should be able to understand how that research was conducted and how the study's findings might apply in his or her department.

Most criminal justice professionals, especially those in supervisory roles, routinely review various performance reports and statistical tabulations. Countless research reports may now be found on the Internet. For example, the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) was established to archive and distribute research reports to criminal justice professionals and researchers around the world. Many such reports are prepared specifically to keep the criminal justice community informed about new research developments and may be downloaded from the NCJRS website (http://www.ncjrs.gov). An understanding of research methods can help decision makers critically evaluate such reports and recognize when methods are properly and improperly applied. The box titled "Home Detention" describes an example of how knowledge of research methods can help policy makers avoid mistakes.

Another objective of this book is to help you produce research. In other courses you take or in your job, you may become a producer of research. Probation officers sometimes test new approaches to supervising or counseling clients, and police officers try new methods of dealing with recurring problems. Many cities and states have a compelling need to evaluate services provided to offenders released from prison or jail. New York State, for example, began an initiative in 2012 to reform juvenile justice by closing secure detention centers in remote areas. Determining whether changes or existing programs are effective is an example of applied research. Police and other justice agencies are increasing pursuing evidence-based practice rooted in systematic research. As a result, justice professionals need to know not only how to interpret research accurately, but also how to produce accurate research.

What Is This Book About?

This book focuses on how we know what we know.

This book focuses on how we learn. Although you will come away from the book knowing many things you don't know right now, our primary purpose is to help you look at how you know things, not what you know.

Home Detention

Home detention with electronic monitoring (ELMO) was widely adopted as an alternative punishment in the United States in the 1980s. The technology for this new sanction was made possible by advances in telecommunications and computer systems. Prompted by growing prison and jail populations, not to mention sales pitches by equipment manufacturers, criminal justice officials embraced ELMO. Questions about the effectiveness of these programs quickly emerged, however, and led to research to determine whether the technology worked. Comprehensive evaluations were conducted in Marion County (Indianapolis), Indiana. Selected findings from these studies illustrate the importance of understanding research methods in general and the meaning of various ways to measure program success in particular.

ELMO programs directed at three groups of people were studied: (1) convicted adult offenders, (2) adults charged with a crime and awaiting trial, and (3) juveniles convicted of burglary or theft. People in each of the three groups were assigned to home detention for a specified time. They could complete the program in one of three ways: (1) successful release after serving their term, (2) removal due to rule violations, such as being arrested again or violating program rules, or (3) running away or absconding. The agencies that administered each program were required to submit regular reports to county officials on how many

(continued)

individuals in each category completed their home detention terms. The accompanying table summarizes the program-completion types during the evaluation study.

	Convicted Adults (%)	Pretrial Adults (%)	Juveniles (%)
Success	81	73	99
Rule violation	14	13	1
Abscond	5	14	0

These percentages, reported by agencies to county officials, indicate that the juvenile program was a big success; virtually all juveniles were successfully released.

Now consider some additional information on each program collected by the evaluation team. Data were gathered on new arrests of program participants and on the number of successful computerized telephone calls to participants' homes.

	Convicted Adults (%)	Pretrial Adults (%)	Juveniles (%)
New arrest	5	1	11
Successful calls	53	52	17

As the table shows, many more juveniles were arrested, and juveniles successfully answered a much lower percentage of telephone calls to their homes. What happened?

The simple answer is that the staff responsible for administering the juvenile program were not keeping track of offenders. The ELMO equipment was not maintained properly, and police were not visiting the homes of juveniles as planned. Because staff were not keeping track of program participants, they were not aware that many juveniles were violating the conditions of home detention. And because they did not detect violations, they naturally reported that the vast majority of young burglars and thieves completed their home detention successfully.

A county official who relied on only agency reports of program success would have made a big mistake in judging the juvenile program to be 99 percent successful. In contrast, an informed consumer of such reports would have been skeptical of a 99 percent success rate and searched for more information.

Source: Adapted from Maxfield and Baumer (1991) and Baumer, Maxfield, and Mendelsohn (1993).

Two Realities

Ultimately, we live in a world of two realities. Part of what we know could be called our *experiential reality*—the things we know from direct experience. If you dive into a glacial stream flowing down through the Canadian Rockies, you don't need anyone to tell you the water is cold; you notice that all by yourself. And if you step on a piece of broken glass, you know it hurts without anyone telling you. These are things you experience.

The other part of what we know could be called our *agreement reality*—the things we consider real because we've been told they're real, and everyone else seems to agree they are real. A big part of growing up in any society, in fact, is learning to accept what everybody around us "knows" to be true. If we don't know those same things, we can't really be a part of society. Ideas about gender, race, religion, and different nations that you learned as you were growing up would fit in this category. We may test a few of these truths on our own, but we simply accept the great majority of them. These are the things that "everybody knows."

To illustrate the difference between agreement and experiential realities, consider preventive police patrol. The term *preventive* implies that when police patrol their assigned beats they prevent crime. Police do not prevent all crime, of course, but it is a commonsense belief that a visible, mobile police force will prevent some crimes. In fact, the value of patrol in preventing crime was a fundamental principle of police operations for many years. A 1967 report on policing for President Lyndon Johnson by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (page 1) stated that "the heart of the police effort against crime is patrol.... The object of patrol is to disperse policemen in a way that will eliminate or reduce the

opportunity for misconduct and to increase the probability that a criminal will be apprehended while he is committing a crime or immediately thereafter." This statement was not based on research, but on traditions that had been embraced by police departments for many years (National Research Council 2004, 20).

Seven years after the President's Commission repot, the Police Foundation, a private research organization, published results from an experimental study that presented a dramatic challenge to the conventional wisdom on police patrol. Known as the Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment, this study compared police beats with three levels of preventive patrol: (1) control beats, with one car per beat; (2) proactive beats, with two or three cars per beat; and (3) reactive beats, with no routine preventive patrol. After almost one year, researchers examined data from the three types of beats and found no differences in crime rates, citizen satisfaction with police, fear of crime, or other measures of police performance (Kelling et al. 1974).

Researchers and law enforcement professionals alike were surprised by these findings. For the record, the Kansas City researchers never claimed to have proved that preventive patrol had no impact on crime. Instead, they argued that police should work more closely with community members and that routine patrol might be more effective if combined with other strategies that used police resources in a more thoughtful way. Subsequent research has supported that last statement. An experimental study of foot patrol in Philadelphia found that assigning foot patrol officers based on analytically identified "hot spots" of crime produced a 23 percent reduction in violent crime after 12 weeks (Ratcliffe et al. 2011).

Additional studies conducted in the 1970s cast doubt on other fundamental assumptions about police practices. A quick response to crime reports made no difference in arrests, according to a research study in Kansas City (Van Kirk 1977). And criminal investigation by police detectives rarely resulted in an arrest (Greenwood 1975).

We mention these examples not to attack routine law enforcement practices but to show that systematic research on policing has illustrated how traditional beliefs—as examples of agreement reality—can be misleading. Simply increasing the number of police officers on patrol does not reduce crime because police patrol often lacks direction. Faster response time to calls for police assistance does not increase arrests because there is often a long delay between the time when a crime occurs and when it is reported to police. Clever detective work seldom solves crimes: investigators get most of their information from reports prepared by patrol officers, who, in turn, get their information from victims and witnesses.

Traditional beliefs about patrol effectiveness and other routine practices are examples of agreement reality, a "reality" that a number of people still embrace. In contrast, the research projects that produced alternative views about each enforcement practice represent experiential reality. These studies are examples of **empirical**[1] research, the production of knowledge based on experience or observation. In each case, researchers conducted studies of police practices and based their conclusions on observations and experience. Empirical research is a way of learning about crime and criminal justice, and explaining how to conduct empirical research is the purpose of this book.

The Role of Science

Science offers an approach to both agreement reality and experiential reality. Scientists have certain criteria that must be met before they will agree on the reality of something they haven't personally experienced. In general, an assertion must have both *logical* and *empirical* support: it must make sense, and it must agree with actual observations. For example, why do earthbound scientists accept the assertion that it's cold on the dark side of the moon? First, it makes sense because the surface heat of the moon comes from the sun's rays. Second, scientific measurements made on the moon's dark

1. Words set in boldface are in the glossary at the end of the book.

side confirm this logical explanation. So scientists accept the reality of things they don't personally experience—they accept an agreement reality—but they have special standards for doing so.

More to the point of this book, however, is that science offers a special approach to the discovery of reality through personal experience. Epistemology is the science of knowing; methodology (a subfield of epistemology) might be called the *science of finding out*. This book focuses on criminal justice **methodology**—how social scientific methods can be used to better understand crime and criminal justice policy. To understand scientific inquiry, let's first look at the kinds of inquiry we all do each day.

Personal Human Inquiry

Everyday human inquiry draws on personal experience and secondhand authority.

Most of us would like to be able to predict how things are going to be for us in the future. We seem quite willing, moreover, to undertake this task using causal and probabilistic reasoning. First, we generally recognize that future circumstances are somehow caused or conditioned by present ones. For example, we learn that getting an education will affect what kind of job we have later in life, and that running stoplights may result in an unhappy encounter with an alert traffic officer. As students, we learn that studying hard will result in better examination grades.

Second, we recognize that such patterns of cause and effect are *probabilistic* in nature: the effects occur more often when the causes occur than when the causes are absent—but not always. Thus, as students, we learn that studying hard produces good grades in most instances, but not every time. We recognize the danger of ignoring stoplights without believing that every such violation will produce a traffic ticket.

The concepts of causality and probability play a prominent role in this book. Science makes causality and probability more explicit, providing techniques for dealing with them more rigorously than does casual human inquiry.

However, our attempts to learn about the world are only partly linked to personal inquiry and direct experience. Another, much larger, part comes from the agreed-on knowledge that others give us. This agreement reality both assists and hinders our attempts to find out things for ourselves. Two important sources of agreement reality—tradition and authority—deserve brief consideration here.

Tradition

Each of us is born into and inherits a culture made up, in part, of firmly accepted knowledge about the workings of the world and the values that guide our participation in it. We may learn from others that planting corn in the spring will result in the greatest assistance from the gods, that the circumference of a circle is approximately 3.14 times its diameter, or that driving on the left side of the road (in the United States) is dangerous.

Tradition, in this sense, has some clear advantages for human inquiry. By accepting what everybody knows, we are spared the overwhelming task of starting from scratch in our search for regularities and understanding. Knowledge is cumulative, and an inherited body of information and understanding is the jumping-off point for the development of more knowledge.

Authority

Despite the power of tradition, new knowledge appears every day. Throughout life, we learn about new discoveries and understandings from others. However, our acceptance of this new knowledge often depends on the status of the discoverer. For example, you are more likely to believe a judge who declares that your next traffic violation will result in a suspension of your driver's license than your parents when they say the same thing.

Like tradition, authority can both help and hinder human inquiry. We do well to trust the judgment of individuals who have special training, expertise, and credentials in a matter, especially in the face of contradictory arguments on a given question. At the same time, inquiry can be greatly hindered by the legitimate authorities who err within their own

special province. Biologists, after all, do make mistakes in the field of biology, and biological knowledge changes over time. Criminal justice research sometimes yields mistaken results, and we are wise to accept research findings with caution even if they come from experts. The box titled "Arrest and Domestic Violence" illustrates the problems that can result when criminal justice policy makers accept too quickly the results from criminal justice research.

Inquiry is also hindered when we depend on the authority of experts speaking outside their realm of expertise. Consider a political or religious leader, lacking any biochemical expertise, who declares climate change to be a myth. The advertising industry plays heavily on this misleading use of authority by having popular athletes discuss the value of various sports drinks and having movie stars evaluate the performance of automobiles.

Arrest and Domestic Violence

In 1983, preliminary results were released from a study on the deterrent effects of arrest in cases of domestic violence. The study reported that male abusers who were arrested were less likely to commit future assaults than offenders who were not arrested. Conducted by researchers from the Police Foundation, the study used rigorous experimental methods adapted from the natural sciences. Criminal justice scholars generally agreed that the research was well designed and executed. Public officials were quick to embrace the study's findings that arresting domestic violence offenders deterred them from future violence.

Here, at last, was empirical evidence to support an effective policy in combating domestic assaults. Results of the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment were widely disseminated, in part because of aggressive efforts by the researchers to publicize their findings (Sherman and Cohn 1989). The attorney general of the United States recommended that police departments make arrests in all cases of misdemeanor domestic violence. Within five years, more than 80 percent of law enforcement agencies in U.S. cities adopted arrest as the preferred way of responding to domestic assaults (Sherman 1992a, 2).

Several things contributed to the rapid adoption of arrest policies to deter domestic violence. First, the experimental study was conducted carefully by highly respected researchers. Second, results were widely publicized in newspapers, in professional journals, and on television programs. Third, officials could understand the study, and most believed that its findings made sense. Finally, mandating arrest in less serious cases of domestic violence was a straightforward and politically attractive approach to a growing problem.

Sherman and Berk (1984), however, urged caution in uncritically embracing the results of their study. Others urged that similar research be conducted in other cities to check on the Minneapolis findings (Lempert 1984). Recognizing the need for more research, the U.S. National Institute of Justice sponsored more experiments—known as replications—in six other cities. Not everyone was happy about the new studies. For example, a feminist group in Milwaukee opposed the replication in that city because it believed that the effectiveness of arrest had already been proved (Sherman and Cohn 1989, 138).

Results from the replication studies brought into question the effectiveness of arrest policies. In three cities, no deterrent effect was found in police records of domestic violence. In other cities, there was no evidence of deterrence for longer periods (6 to 12 months), and in three cities, researchers found that violence actually escalated when offenders were arrested (Sherman 1992a, 30). For example, Sherman and associates (1992, 167) report that in Milwaukee "the initial deterrent effects observed for up to thirty days quickly disappear. By one year later [arrests] produce an escalation effect." Arrest works in some cases but not in others. In responding to domestic assaults, as in many other cases, it's important to carefully consider the characteristics of offenders and the nature of the relationship between offender and victim.

After police departments throughout the country embraced arrest policies following the Minneapolis study, researchers were faced with the difficult task of explaining why initial results must be qualified. Arrest seemed to make sense; officials and the general public believed what they read in the papers and saw on television. Changing their minds by reporting complex findings was more difficult.

Both tradition and authority, then, are double-edged swords in the search for knowledge about the world. Simply put, they provide us with a starting point for our own inquiry, but they may lead us to start at the wrong point or push us in the wrong direction.

Errors in Personal Human Inquiry

Everyday personal human inquiry reveals a number of potential biases.

Aside from the potential dangers of relying on tradition and authority, we often stumble when we set out to learn for ourselves. Let's consider some of the common errors we make in our own casual inquiries and then look at the ways science provides safeguards against those errors.

Inaccurate Observation

The keystone of inquiry is observation. But quite frequently we fail to observe things right in front of us or mistakenly observe things that aren't so. Do you recall what your instructor was wearing on the first day of this class? If you had to guess now, what are the chances you would be right?

In contrast to casual human inquiry, scientific observation is a conscious activity. Simply making observations in a more deliberate way helps to reduce error. If you had gone to the first class meeting with a conscious plan to observe and record what your instructor was wearing, you would have increased your chances of accuracy.

In many cases, using both simple and complex measurement devices helps to guard against inaccurate observations. Suppose that you had taken photographs of your instructor on the first day. The photos would have added a degree of precision well beyond that provided by unassisted human memory.

Overgeneralization

When we look for patterns among the specific things we observe around us, we often assume that a few similar events are evidence of a general pattern. The tendency to overgeneralize is probably greatest when there is pressure to reach a general understanding, yet overgeneralization also occurs in the absence of pressure. Whenever overgeneralization does occur, it can misdirect or impede inquiry.

Imagine you are a rookie police officer newly assigned to foot patrol in an urban neighborhood. Your sergeant wants to meet with you at the end of your shift to discuss what you think are the major law enforcement problems on the beat. Eager to earn favor with your supervisor, you interview the manager of a convenience store in a small shopping area. If the manager mentions vandalism as the biggest concern, you might report that vandalism is the main problem on your beat, even though other business owners and area residents believe that drug dealing contributes to the neighborhood problems of burglary, street robbery, and vandalism. Overgeneralization leads to misrepresentation and simplification of the problems on your beat.

Criminal justice researchers guard against overgeneralization by committing themselves in advance to a sufficiently large sample of observations and by being attentive to how representative those observations are. The **replication** of inquiry provides another safeguard. Replication means repeating a study, checking to see whether similar results are obtained each time. The study may also be repeated under slightly different conditions or in different locations. The box titled "Arrest and Domestic Violence" describes an example of why replication can be especially important in applied research.

Selective Observation

Another danger of overgeneralization is that it may lead to selective observation. Once we have concluded that a particular pattern exists and have developed a general understanding of why, we will be tempted to pay attention to future events and situations that correspond with the pattern and to ignore those that do not. Racial, ethnic, and other prejudices are reinforced by selective observation.

Research plans often specify in advance the number and kind of observations to be made as a

basis for reaching a conclusion. For example, if we wanted to learn whether women are more likely than men to support long prison sentences for sex offenders, we would plan to make a specified number of observations on that question. We might select a thousand people to be interviewed. Even if the first 10 women supported long sentences and the first 10 men opposed them, we would continue to interview everyone selected for the study and record each observation. We would base our conclusion on an analysis of all the observations, not just those first 20 respondents.

Illogical Reasoning

People have various ways of handling observations that contradict their judgments about the way things are. Surely one of the most remarkable creations of the human mind is the maxim about the exception that proves the rule, an idea that makes no sense at all. An exception can draw attention to a rule or to a supposed rule, but in no system of logic can it prove the rule it contradicts. Yet we often use this pithy saying to brush away contradictions with a simple stroke of illogic.

What statisticians call the *gambler's fallacy* is another illustration of illogic in day-to-day reasoning. According to this fallacy, a consistent run of good or bad luck is presumed to foreshadow its opposite. An evening of bad luck at poker may kindle the belief that a winning hand is just around the corner; many a poker player has stayed in a game too long because of that mistaken belief. Conversely, an extended period of good weather may lead us to worry that it is certain to rain on our weekend picnic.

Ideology and Politics

Crime is, of course, an important social problem, and a great deal of controversy surrounds policies for dealing with crime. Many people feel strongly one way or another about the death penalty, gun control, and long prison terms as approaches to reducing crime. There is ongoing concern about racial bias in police practices and sentencing policies. Being tougher on sex offenders has become a favorite topic of state legislatures. Ideological or political views on such issues can undermine objectivity in the research process. Criminal justice professionals may have particular difficulty separating ideology and politics from a more detached, scientific study of crime.

Criminologist Samuel Walker (1994, 16) compares ideological bias in criminal justice research to theology: "The basic problem … is that faith triumphs over facts. For both liberals and conservatives, certain ideas are unchallenged articles of faith, almost like religious beliefs that remain unshaken by empirical facts."

Most of us have our own beliefs about public policy, including policies for dealing with crime. The danger lies in allowing such beliefs to distort how research problems are defined and how research results are interpreted. The scientific approach to the study of crime and criminal justice policy guards against, but does not prevent, ideology and theology from coloring the research process. In empirical research, so-called articles of faith are compared with experience.

Purposes of Research

We conduct criminal justice research to serve various purposes.

Criminal justice research serves many purposes. Explaining associations between things such as police patrol and crime levels is one of those purposes; others include exploration, description, and application. Although a given study can have several purposes, it is useful to examine them separately because each has different implications for how we structure research.

Exploration

Much research in criminal justice is conducted to explore a specific problem, known as **exploratory research**. A researcher or official may be interested in a crime or criminal justice policy issue about which little is known. Or perhaps an innovative approach to mentoring in juvenile justice has been

tried in some jurisdiction, and the researcher wishes to determine how common such practices are in other cities or states. An exploratory project might collect data on a measure to establish a baseline with which future changes will be compared.

For example, heightened concern with bullying might prompt efforts to estimate the level of bullying in high schools. How many reports are made to high school teachers? Do parents complain that their children have been subject to intimidation at school? Does bullying take different forms when the targets are male or female? Are gay, lesbian, and bisexual students particular targets? Are students suspected of bullying involved in delinquency? Does bullying have an effect on school attendance? These are examples of research questions intended to explore different aspects of the problem of bullying. Exploratory questions may also be formulated in connection with how parents and schools respond to the problem. How many schools have created special anti-bullying education programs? Are services available to victims? Can cyber-bullying be reduced by installing special applications on smart phones?

Description

A key purpose of many criminal justice studies is to describe the scope of the crime problem or policy responses to the problem. In **descriptive research**, a researcher or public official observes and then describes what was observed. Criminal justice observation and description, methods grounded in the social sciences, tend to be more accurate than the casual observations people may make about how much crime there is or how violent teenagers are today. Descriptive studies are often concerned with counting or documenting observations; exploratory studies focus more on developing a preliminary understanding about a new or unusual problem.

Descriptive studies are frequently conducted in criminal justice. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has compiled Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) since 1930. UCR data are routinely reported in newspapers and widely interpreted as accurately describing crime in the United States. For example, 2012 UCR figures (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2013a) showed that California had the highest rate of auto theft (443.2 thefts per 100,000 residents) in the nation and Vermont had the lowest (69.5 per 100,000 residents).

Descriptive studies in criminal justice have other uses. A researcher may attend meetings of neighborhood anticrime groups and observe their efforts to organize block watch committees. These observations form the basis for a case study that describes the activities of neighborhood anticrime groups. Such a descriptive study might present information that officials and residents of other cities can use to promote such organizations themselves. Or consider research by Copes, Hochstetler, and Cherbonneau (2012) in which they describe how carjackers use different techniques to overcome victim resistance.

Explanation

A third general purpose of criminal justice research is to explain things. Reporting that urban residents have generally favorable attitudes toward police is a descriptive activity, but reporting *why* some people believe that police are doing a good job while other people do not is an example of **explanatory research**. Similarly, reporting why California has the highest auto-theft rate in the nation is explanation; simply reporting auto-theft rates for different states is description. A researcher has an explanatory purpose if he or she wishes to know why the number of 14-year-olds involved in gangs has increased, as opposed to simply describing changes in gang membership.

Application

Researchers also conduct criminal justice studies of an applied nature. **Applied research** stems from a need for facts and findings with specific policy implications. Another purpose of criminal justice research, therefore, is its application to public policy. We can distinguish two types of applied research: evaluation and policy/problem analysis.

Applied research is often used to evaluate the effects of specific criminal justice programs. Determining whether a program designed to reduce burglary actually had the intended effect is an example

of evaluation. In its most basic form, evaluation involves comparing the goals of a program with the results. If one goal of increased police foot patrol is to reduce fear of crime, then an evaluation of foot patrol might compare levels of fear before and after increasing the number of police officers on the beat on foot. In most cases, evaluation research uses social scientific methods to test the results of a program or policy change.

The second type of applied research is the analysis of general justice policies and more specific problems. What would happen to court backlogs if we designated a judge and prosecutor who would handle only drug-dealing cases? How many new police officers would have to be hired if a department shifted to community policing? These are examples of *what-if* questions addressed by policy analysis. Policy analysis is different from other forms of criminal justice research primarily in its focus on future events. Rather than observing and analyzing current or past behavior, policy analysis tries to anticipate the future consequences of alternative actions.

Similarly, justice organizations are increasingly using techniques of problem analysis to study patterns of cases and devise appropriate responses. Problem-oriented policing is perhaps the best-known example, in which crime analysts work with police and other organizations to examine recurring problems. Ron Clarke and John Eck (2005) have prepared a comprehensive guide for this type of applied research.

Our brief discussion of distinct research purposes is not intended to imply that research purposes are mutually exclusive. Many criminal justice studies have elements of more than one purpose. Suppose you want to examine the problem of bicycle theft at your university. First, you need some information that describes the problem of bicycle theft on campus. Let's assume your research finds that thefts from some campus locations have declined but that there was an increase in bikes stolen from racks outside dormitories. You might explain these findings by noting that bicycles parked outside dorms tend to be unused for longer periods of time and that there is more coming and going among bikes parked near classrooms. One option to further reduce thefts would be to purchase more secure bicycle racks. A policy analysis might compare the costs of installing the racks with the predicted savings resulting from a reduction in bike theft.

Incidentally, the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing has published an extremely useful guide on the problem of bicycle theft (Johnson, Sidebottom, and Thorpe 2008). In addition to its substantive value, this guide is an example of applied research that can be conducted and used by justice professionals. Visit the website http://www.popcenter.org for more information and examples.

How to Design a Research Project

Designing research requires planning several stages, but the stages do not always occur in the same sequence.

We've now seen how casual human inquiry can set us up for making mistakes, and we have summarized basic research purposes. But what if you were to undertake a research project yourself? Where would you start? Then where would you go? How would you begin planning your research? College courses on research methods in criminal justice often require students to design a research project. The rest of this chapter covers the basics of planning research and writing a proposal.

Every project has a starting point, but it is important to think through later stages, even at the beginning. Figure 1.1 presents a schematic view of the social scientific research process. Think of this as a sort of map that provides an overview of the whole process before we launch into the details of particular components of research.

The Research Process

At the top of the diagram in Figure 1.1 are interests, ideas, theories, and new programs—the possible beginning points for a line of research. The letters (*A, B, X, Y*, and so forth) represent concepts such as deterrence or burglary. Thus, you might

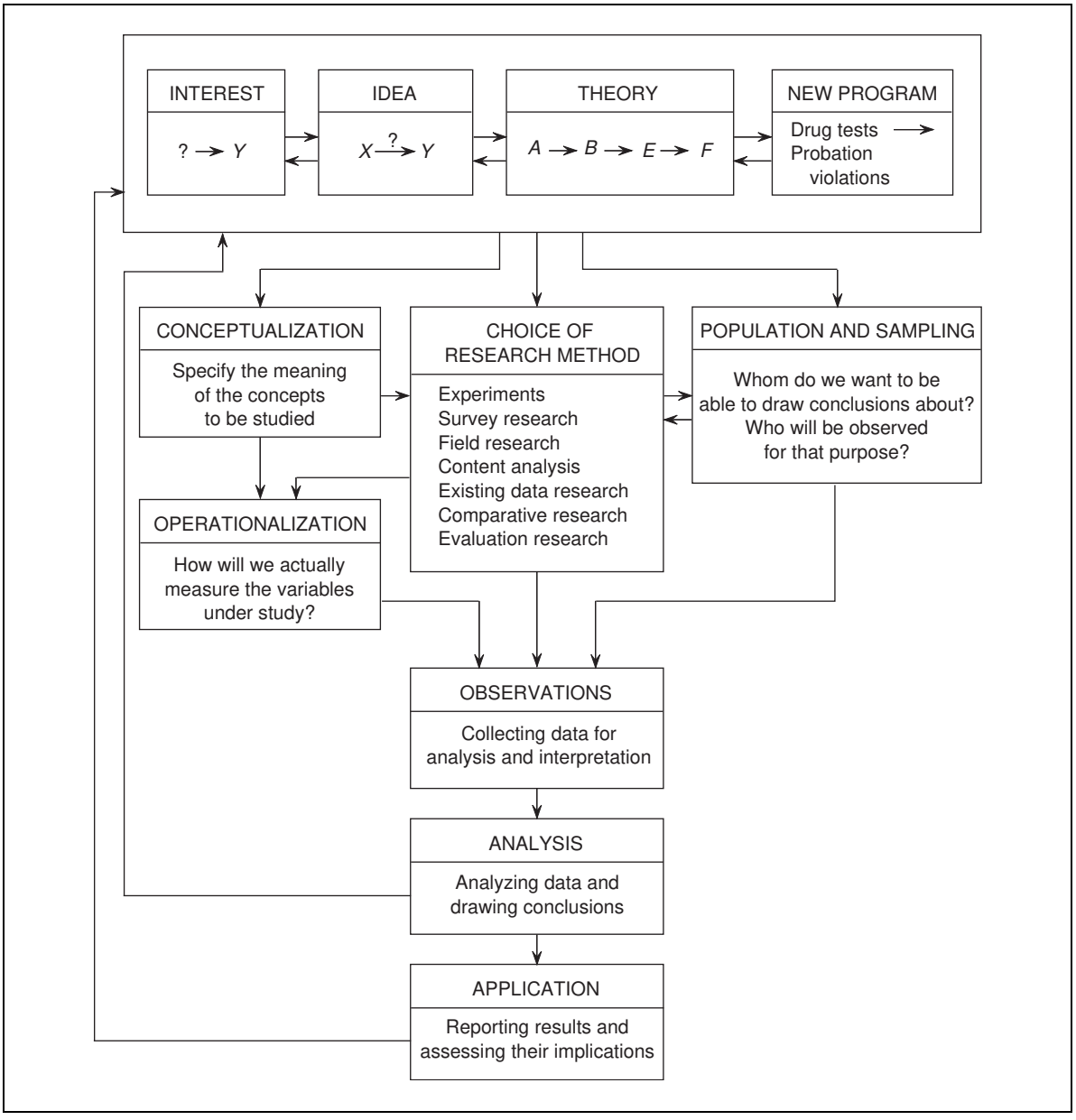


FIGURE 1.1 The Research Process

have a general interest in finding out why the threat of punishment deters some but not all people from committing crimes, or you might want to investigate how burglars select their targets. Question marks in the diagram indicate that you aren't sure things are the way you suspect they are. We have represented a theory as a complex set of relationships among several concepts (*A, B, E,* and *F*).

The research process might also begin with an idea for a new program. Imagine that you are the director of a community-based organization that provides tutoring for students of incarcerated parents and want to see how writing skills develop as a result. Because you have taken a course on criminal justice research methods, you decide to design an evaluation of the new program before trying it out. The research process begins with your idea for the tutoring program.

Notice the movement back and forth among these several possible beginnings, represented by the arrows between the top boxes. An initial interest may lead to the formulation of an idea, which may fit into a larger theory, and the theory may produce new ideas and create new interests. Or your understanding of some theory may encourage you to consider new policies.

To make this discussion more concrete, let's take a specific research example. Suppose you are concerned about the problem of sexual assault on your campus and you have a special interest in learning more about how other students view the issue and what they think should be done about it. Going a step further, let's say you have the impression that students are especially concerned about the problem and how college officials are addressing it. Further, given the passage of the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act in 2013, you recognize that the scope and nature of sexual assault are not well understood, in general as well as on college campuses (National Research Council 2013). The source of this idea might be your own interest after being a student for a couple of years. You might develop the idea while reading about violent crime in a course you are taking. Perhaps you recently read stories about sexual violence and alleged cover-up attempts (Steinhauer 2014). Or maybe some combination of factors makes you want to learn more about campus crime.

Considering the research purposes discussed earlier in this chapter, your research will be mainly exploratory. You probably have descriptive and explanatory interests as well: How much of a problem is sexual violence crime on campus? Are students especially concerned about sexual assault in certain settings? Are some students more worried about the problem than others? Why? What do students think would be effective ways to address sexual assault on campus?

Getting Started

To begin pursuing your interest in student concerns about violent crime, you undoubtedly will want to read something about the issue. You might begin by finding out what research has been done on sexual assault and campus crime generally. Items posted on a campus website might provide information about crimes that occurred recently. In addition, you will probably want to talk to people, such as other students, college officials, or campus police officers. These activities will prepare you to handle various decisions about research design. As you review the research literature, you should make note of how other researchers approached the problem and consider whether the same designs will meet your research objective.

What is your objective, by the way? It's important that you are clear about that before you design your study. Do you plan to write a paper based on your research to satisfy a course requirement or as an honors thesis? Is your purpose to gain information that will support an argument for improvements in efforts to protect students from sexual assault? Do you want to write an article for the campus newspaper or blog?

Usually, your objective for undertaking research can be expressed in a report. The website for this book includes information that will help you with the organization of research reports. We recommend that you make an outline of such a report as the first step in the design of any project. You should be clear about the kinds of statements you will want to make when the research is complete. Here are two examples of such statements: "*X* percentage of State U students believe that sexual assault is a big problem on campus," and "Female students living off campus are more likely than females living in dorms to feel that emergency phones should be installed near buildings where evening classes are held." Although your final report may not look much like

your initial image of it, outlining the planned report will help you make better decisions about research design.

Conceptualization

We often talk casually about criminal justice concepts such as deterrence, recidivism, crime prevention, community policing, and child abuse, but it is necessary to specify what we mean by these concepts to do research on them. Chapter 4 will examine this process of **conceptualization** in depth. For now, let's see what it might involve in our hypothetical example.

If you are going to study student concerns about violent crime, you must first specify what you mean by *concern about sexual assault*. This ambiguous phrase can mean different things to different people. Campus police officers are concerned about sexual assault because that is part of their job. Students may have two kinds of concerns. On the one hand, they might be concerned about sexual assault in much the same way they are concerned about other social problems, such as immigration, health care, and the global economy. They recognize these issues as problems society must deal with, but they don't feel that the issues affect them directly; we could specify this concept as *general concern about sexual assault*. On the other hand, students, especially women, may feel that sexual assault does affect them directly, and they express some fear about the possibility of being a victim; let's call this *fear for personal safety*.

Of course, you need to specify all the concepts you wish to study. If you want to study the possible effect of concern about sexual assault on student behavior, you'll have to decide whether you want to limit your focus to specific precautionary behavior, such as keeping doors locked, or general behavior, such as going to classes and parties or dating.

Choice of Research Method

A variety of methods are available to the criminal justice researcher. Each method has strengths and weaknesses, and certain concepts are more appropriately studied by some methods than by others.

A survey is the most appropriate method for studying both general concern and fear of personal sexual assault victimization. You might interview students directly or ask them to fill out an online questionnaire. As we'll see in Chapter 7, surveys are especially well suited to the study of individuals' attitudes and opinions. Thus, if you wish to examine whether students who are concerned about sexual assault are more likely to believe that college officials are not doing enough about the problem compared to students who are not concerned, then a survey is a good method.

Other methods described later in this book may be appropriate. Through content analysis (discussed in Chapter 10), you might examine postings on a campus blog and analyze what the writers believe should be done to reduce sexual assault. Field research (see Chapter 9), in which you observe behavior at parties, will help you understand social contexts that are believed to heighten risk of sexual violence. Or you might study official complaints made to police and college administrators. This may be difficult given the profoundly sensitive topic of sexual attacks. As you read Part Three, you'll see how other research methods might be used to study this topic. Often the best study design is one that uses more than one research method, taking advantage of their different strengths.

Operationalization

Having specified the concepts to be studied and chosen the research method, you now must develop specific measurement procedures. **Operationalization**, discussed in Chapter 4, refers to the concrete steps, or operations, used to measure specific concepts.

If you decide to use a survey to study concern about sexual assault, your operationalization will take the form of questionnaire items. You might operationalize concern about sexual assault with the question: "How worried are you about the risk of being sexually attacked while on campus or at college-related social events?" This could be followed by boxes indicating the possible answers "Worried" and "Not worried." Student attitudes

about ways of responding to reported cases of assault could be operationalized with the item "Listed below are different actions that might be taken in response to a report of sexual assault. Beside each description, indicate whether you favor or oppose the action described." This could be followed by several different actions, with "Favor" and "Oppose" boxes beside each.

Population and Sampling

In addition to refining concepts and measurements, decisions must be made about whom or what to study. The population for a study is that group about whom we want to be able to draw conclusions. Groups are usually made up of people, but we may wish to study a group of drug rehabilitation clinics. We are almost never able to study all the members of the population that interests us, so we often sample subjects for study. Chapter 6 describes methods for selecting samples that adequately reflect the whole population that interests us. Notice in Figure 1.1 that decisions about population and sampling are related to decisions about the research method to be used.

In the study of concern about sexual assault, the relevant population is the student population of your college. As you'll discover in Chapter 6, however, selecting a sample requires you to be more specific than that. Will you include part-time as well as full-time students? Students who live on campus, off campus, or both? Many such questions must be answered in terms of your research purpose. In a study of concern about sexual assault, you might consider limiting your population to female students. If you're more interested in attitudes about preventing sexual violence, you will want to be sure that your study population includes faculty, campus officials, and others who are thought to be possible resources for prevention.

Observations

Having decided what to study, among whom, and by what method, you are ready to make observations—to collect empirical data. The chapters of Part Three, which describe various research methods, discuss the different observation methods appropriate to each.

For a survey of concern about sexual violence, you would probably prepare an electronic questionnaire and e-mail a link to the questionnaire to a sample selected from the student body. You might also have a team of interviewers conduct the survey over the telephone. The relative advantages and disadvantages of these and other possibilities are discussed in Chapter 7.

Analysis

We manipulate the collected data for the purpose of drawing conclusions that reflect on the interests, ideas, and theories that initiated the inquiry. Notice in Figure 1.1 that the results of your analyses feed back into your initial interests, ideas, and theories. In practice, this feedback may initiate another cycle of inquiry. In the study of student concern about sexual violence, the analysis phase will have both descriptive and explanatory purposes. You might begin by calculating the percentage of students who are very concerned about the problem.

Moving beyond simple description, you might examine the opinions of different subsets of the student body: men versus women; freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students; and students who live in dorms versus off-campus apartments. You might then conduct some explanatory analysis to make the point that students who live in off-campus apartments are least satisfied with how college officials respond to reports of sexual assault.

Application

The final stage of the research process involves using the research you've conducted and the conclusions you've reached. To start, you will probably want to communicate your findings so that others will know what you've learned. You will usually prepare some kind of written report. Perhaps you will make oral presentations in class or at a professional meeting. Or you might create a web page that presents your results. Other students will be interested in hearing what you have learned about sexual assault on campus.

Your study might also be used to actually do something about campus safety. Drawing on a summary of prevention strategies prepared by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, you might recommend hot-spot mapping of reported incidents and creating bystander intervention programs (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2014, 4). Prevention programs might be launched in dormitories if residents are more concerned about sexual violence than students who live in other types of housing.

Thinking About Research Problems

One of the most important, yet surprisingly difficult, parts of the research process is specifying and framing your interest in a particular problem or question.

What are you interested in understanding? Surely you have several questions about crime and possible policy responses. Why do some juvenile gangs sell drugs whereas others steal cars? Why do particular neighborhoods near campus seem to have higher rates of burglary? How often are guns found in stop-and-frisk operations? Do sentencing policies discriminate against minorities? Do cities with gun control laws have lower murder rates? Is burglary more common in single-family homes or apartment buildings? Are sentences for rape more severe in some states than in others? Are mandatory jail sentences more effective than license suspension in reducing repeat drunk-driving offenses? Think for a while about the kinds of questions that interest and concern you.

To give you ideas about the many possible subjects for research, here are topics of papers written by students in the first class Michael Maxfield taught at John Jay College in fall 2010:

- Risk assessment in juvenile parole hearings*
- The effect of religion and culture on attitudes about suicide
- Determining the extent to which arrest frequency is associated with substance addiction and mental illness
- Links between domestic violence and indirect spouse abuse after separation**
- An exploratory study of pimps in Atlantic City, New Jersey*
- An experimental study of attitudes toward sex offenders in Spain***
- Whether sexual abuse by Catholic priests is a product of sexual preference or situational factors
- Community disorganization and crime on Native American lands[2]

In most cases, researchers find themselves reworking or clarifying research problems as they learn more about a topic. That was the case for students in Maxfield's class. The student studying pimps was surprised to learn that only a minority of prostitutes in Atlantic City had anything like the classic worker/manager relationship with a pimp. That led to reframing the research to begin by classifying the different ways prostitutes worked with pimps and others playing pimplike roles.

You're advised to begin with your own interests and experiences and then learn more about what research has been done. For example, the third topic listed above was examined by a student with considerable experience in correctional settings. She began with her observation that people arrested frequently for minor offenses often seem driven more by substance abuse and mental health problems than by any overt criminal intent. The student then conducted research to learn more about existing research on jail populations, and she revised her topic as she read more of the research literature.

Students sometimes have difficulty narrowing interests to researchable questions. We are all concerned about crime and justice problems to some degree, but our casual interests can be misleading. Reading research about crime and justice problems is a good way to get ideas about research topics and to see how social science addresses problems that are treated more casually in popular literature. The box "Getting Ideas about Research Questions" offers more advice in this regard.

2. Those topics marked with * led to completed dissertations; ** signals completed dissertations and published articles; and *** marks a completed dissertation, published articles, and the winner of the European Society of Criminology Young Criminologist Award.

Getting Ideas About Research Topics

Many people will have some idea what sort of research question they're interested in, no matter how general the idea may be. Even so, it can be difficult for beginning researchers to get started. Here are some tips for finding and fleshing out preliminary ideas about research topics.

Do an Internet Search, but Use Specialized Tools

For example, type this phrase into a Google search panel: "sex offender residency restrictions." In May 2014 this entry produced an estimated 146,000 results that included mass media stories, links to legislation, and many other types of sites. Then type the same phrase into a Google Scholar search panel (go to http://scholar.google.com). In May 2014 this yielded about 280 results of scholarly books and articles on the topic. Reading examples of these, or mass media stories for that matter, will give you ideas about how to begin research on sex offender residency restrictions.

Replicate an Existing Study

Berenson and Appelbaum (2011) examined where sex offenders lived in two New York counties. They were interested in laws that required sex offenders to live a minimum distance from places like schools and other public facilities, as well as the effects that such laws have on housing choices for sex offenders. Two findings were noteworthy. First, 73 to 97 percent of existing housing units in the two counties were off-limits to sex offenders because they were too close to specified facilities. Second, and a consequence of the first finding, most sex offenders living in the two counties were in violation of the restrictions. What about in your city or county? Since data on where sex offenders live is widely available, you could conduct a similar kind of study in a different place.

Follow Up on Recommendations for Further Research

Many research articles and books conclude by describing how subsequent research can add to knowledge. So if you find an article interesting, you might get an idea from the authors' suggestions for further research. For example, White and Loeber (2008) examined links between bullying in school, placement in special education programs, and later involvement in serious delinquency. They found that later delinquency often followed bullying, regardless of placement in special education programs. Their research was based on interviews over a period of years with students in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania schools. Near the end of their article, they recommend that future research use systematic observations of behavior in different types of school activity (page 393). If you were interested in the problem of bullying or violence in middle schools, reading articles that report research on the topic could give you ideas about designing your own study.

Ask Your Professor

If one of the requirements for your research methods course is to write a research proposal or actually do some research, you should find out what topics are of special interest to your instructor. This does not mean you should engage in idle flattery. Instead, think of your instructor as both an expert and a professional scholar, someone who is probably doing research for a book, scholarly article, or dissertation. Your professor is an expert in what research might need to be done in a particular area. So don't hesitate to ask for ideas. Be sure use focused questions, such as: "What sorts of topics are you interested in?" That's better than asking something like: "Can you give me some ideas? I don't know where to begin."

Reviewing the Literature

Researchers begin a research project with a review of the literature.

Research should be seen as an extension of what has previously been learned about a particular topic. A review of the literature will tell you what's already known and not known. In most cases, you should organize your search of the literature around the key concepts you wish to study. Alternatively, you may want to study a certain population: corrections officers, sex offenders, drug counselors, computer hackers, and so forth. In any case, you'll identify a set of terms that represent your core interests.

Conducting a literature review has become both much easier and much more challenging with the expansion of information and search tools on

the Internet. It's easier in the sense that much information can be accessed through the Internet without having to visit bricks-and-mortar libraries. Most colleges and universities now have online access to academic journals. Reports by government agencies and private organizations are readily available to anyone with access to the web.

Reviewing what others have found about a problem has become more difficult largely for the same reason: it's easy to access a seemingly endless supply of documents. This has produced a related problem of how to sort through all the information, separating research findings from the demented ramblings of ideologues and everything in between. After providing guidelines on how to find relevant literature, we'll suggest some cautionary strategies.

General Strategies

Doing a literature review is basically a process of accumulating, sorting through, and synthesizing information. We all do this every day in different, usually informal ways. Doing a literature review for research is more systematic and deliberate, just like the research process in general. It's best to keep notes of articles, books, websites, or other things as you review them. Also keep in mind that research literature accumulates; research studies usually build on previous studies, as we noted in the box "Getting Ideas about Research Topics."

Getting Started Start with a book or an article that deals with your topic and expand from there. We'll call this your source document. Expanding can mean going both backward, consulting readings cited in your source document, and forward, in which you find later research that is based on your source document. For example, if you're interested in terrorism, you might read the book *Outsmarting the Terrorists* by Ronald Clarke and Graeme Newman (2006). In conducting your literature review, you would read the selected references shown in the book's bibliography.

But you would also be interested in later research that expands on what Clarke and Newman wrote in 2006. One of the best ways to do this is to use the website Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com). Type "clarke newman outsmarting" in the search box, and one of the first references that pops up should be their book. In May 2014 this search showed that 170 subsequent publications had cited the book. Clicking on "cited by 170" produces a list of these publications, together with links to further information about the books or journals that cite Clarke and Newman. In this way, you can find out about more current research that's been published since your source document. For example, Cynthia Lum and colleagues (2013) apply some of the "outsmarting principles" to their study of fairness in passenger screening at airports.

Being Selective Sources like Google Scholar offer a built-in quality control by limiting your search to academic journals and related publications. However, you may want to find other types of materials, such as government reports, or studies published by other types of organizations. Ronald Clarke and Phyllis Schultze offer a useful warning and guideline: "Unlike scholarly books and journal articles, websites are seldom reviewed or refereed. You need to be critical of the information you use when it comes to the Web, because anyone can make a website that looks expert. In general, rely more heavily on those sites sponsored by colleges and universities, government agencies, and professional organizations" (Clarke and Schultze 2005, 24).

Some college or university libraries provide more detailed suggestions on how to evaluate information you discover in your research. For example, the Meriam Library at California State University Chico (2010) describes evaluation criteria referred to as the "CRAAP Test":

- Currency: Information timeliness
- Relevance: Does the information apply to your specific topic?
- Authority: The source of the information
- Accuracy: Is the information based on fact or opinion?
- Purpose: Why does the information exist? Why is it presented?

Another useful guide is an online tutorial prepared by the teaching library at the University of

California Berkeley (University of California Berkeley Library 2014). See especially the advice on how to sort out different domains and how to check out the authenticity of a named author.

Even the fabled National Security Agency (NSA) has gotten into the act, with their publication, *Untangling the Web: A Guide to Internet Research* (National Security Agency 2007). Approved for public release six years after the 12th edition had been completed, this 600+ page guide lists general-purpose and specialized tools. Much has changed since the guide's publication, but the NSA authors offer timeless advice on how to think about search strategies and combine terms in productive ways.

Using a Library Although it is no longer necessary to visit a physical library to access many published research materials, libraries and librarians remain critical resources for research. Librarians can help you develop strategies for searching the literature and evaluating the different sources you find. Clarke and Schultze offer excellent advice on how to use different types of libraries. For research on crime and justice, the Don M. Gottfredson Library of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University, under the direction of Phyllis Schultze, is the best single resource available anywhere in the world, with unmatched physical and online resources. Visit the library through the World Criminal Justice Library Electronic Network at http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~wcjlen/WCJ/.

How to Read Scholarly Research

You don't read a social research report the same way you'd read a novel. You can, of course, but it's not the most effective approach. Journal articles and books are laid out somewhat differently, so here are some initial guidelines for reading each.

Reading a Journal Article In most journals, each article begins with an abstract. Read it first. It should tell you the purpose of the research, the methods used, and the major findings. The abstract serves two major functions. First, it gives you a good idea as to whether you'll want to read the rest of the article. If you're reviewing the literature for a paper you're writing, the abstract tells you whether that particular article is relevant. Second, the abstract establishes a framework within which to read the rest of the article. It may raise questions in your mind regarding method or conclusions, thereby creating an agenda to pursue in your reading.

After you've read the abstract, you might go directly to the summary and/or conclusions at the end of the article. That will give you a more detailed picture of what the article is all about. Jot down any new questions or observations that occur to you.

Next, skim the article, noting the section headings and any tables or graphs. You don't need to study any of these things in your skimming, though it's fine to review anything that catches your attention. By the end of this step, you should start feeling familiar with the article. You should be pretty clear on the researcher's conclusions and have a general idea of the methods used in reaching them.

If you decide to carefully read the whole article, you'll have a good idea of where it's heading and how each section fits into the logic of the whole article. Keep taking notes. Mark any passages you think you might like to quote later on. After carefully reading the article, it's a good idea to skim it quickly one more time. This way you get back in touch with the forest after having focused on the trees.

If you want to fully grasp what you've just read, find someone else to explain it to. If you're doing the reading in connection with a course, you should have no trouble finding someone willing to listen. However, if you can explain it coherently to someone who has no prior contact with the subject matter, you'll know you have an absolute lock on the material.

Reading a Book-Length Report The approach for articles can be adapted to reading a book-length report, sometimes also called a research monograph. These longer research reports cover the same basic terrain and roughly the same structure. Instead of an abstract, the preface and opening chapter of the book lay out the purpose, method, and main findings of the study. The preface is usually written more informally and so may be easier to understand than an abstract.

As with an article, it's useful to skim through the book, getting a sense of its organization, its use of tables

and graphs, and its main findings. You should come away from this step feeling somewhat familiar with the book. Take notes as you go along, writing down things you observe and questions that are raised.

As you settle in to read the book more carefully, you should repeat this same process with each chapter. Read the opening paragraphs to get a sense of what's to come and then skip to the concluding paragraphs for the summary. Skim the chapter to increase your familiarity with it, and then read more deliberately, taking notes as you go.

It's sometimes okay to skip portions of a scholarly book, but this depends on your purpose in reading it in the first place. Perhaps only a few portions of the book are relevant to your research. However, if you are interested in the researcher's findings, you must pay some attention to the methods used (e.g., who was studied, how, and when?) to be able to judge the quality of the conclusions offered by the author.

The Research Proposal

Research proposals describe planned activities and include a budget and time line.

If you undertake a research project—an assignment for this course, perhaps, or even a major study funded by the government or a research foundation—you will probably have to provide a research proposal describing what you intend to accomplish and how. We'll conclude this chapter with advice on how you might prepare such a proposal. As we do this, think of the research proposal as another way to get an overview of the research process.

Elements of a Research Proposal

Some funding agencies have specific requirements for a proposal's elements, structure, or both. For example, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) describes a range of funding opportunities together with what should be included in research proposals (http://www.nij.gov/funding/Pages/current.aspx?status=current). Your instructor may also have certain requirements for a research proposal you are to prepare in this course. Here are some basic elements that should be included in almost any research proposal.

Problem or Objective What exactly do you want to study? Why is it worth studying? Does the proposed study contribute to our general understanding of crime or policy responses to crime? Does it have practical significance? If your proposal describes an evaluation study, then the problem, objective, or research questions may already be specified for you. For example, in its request for research on violent victimization in Native American communities, the NIJ asked that proposals describe how they would address certain topics (National Institute of Justice 2014, 5):

- Provide tested measures of violence and victimization among tribal youth.
- Develop improved collection procedures for self-report data from tribal youth.

In most cases, however, you will specify the research problem or objective.

Literature Review As we described in the previous section, research begins by reviewing what others have said about your topic.

Research Questions What specific questions will your research try to answer? Given what others have found, as stated in your literature review, what new information do you expect to find? It's useful to view research questions as a more specific version of the problem or objective described earlier. Then, of course, your specific questions should be framed in the context of what other research has found.

Subjects for Study Whom or what will you study in order to collect data? Identify the subjects in general terms, and then specifically identify who (or what) are available for study and how you will reach them. Is it appropriate to select a sample? If so, how will you do that? If there is any possibility that your research will have an impact on those you study, how will you ensure that they are not harmed by the research? Finally, if you will be interacting directly with human subjects, you will probably have to include a consent form, as we describe in Chapter 2.

Measurement What are the key variables in your study? How will you define and measure them? Do your definitions and measurement methods duplicate (which is okay, incidentally) or differ from those of previous research on this topic?

Data Collection Methods How will you actually collect the data for your study? Will you observe behavior directly or conduct a survey? Will you undertake field research, or will you focus on the reanalysis of data already collected by others? Criminal justice research often includes more than one such method.

Analysis Briefly describe the kind of analysis you plan to conduct. Spell out the purpose and logic of your analysis. Are you interested in precise description? Do you intend to explain why things are the way they are? Will you analyze the impact of a new program? What possible explanatory variables will your analysis consider, and how will you know whether you've explained the program impact adequately?

References Be sure to include a list of all materials you consulted and cited in your proposal. Formats for citations vary. Your instructor may specify certain formats or may refer you to specific style manuals for guidelines on how to cite books, articles, and web-based resources.

Schedule It is often appropriate to provide a schedule for the various stages of research. Even if you don't do this for the proposal, do it for yourself. If you don't have a time line for accomplishing the stages of research and keeping track of how you're doing, you may end up in trouble.

Budget If you are asking someone to give you money to pay the costs of your research, you will need to provide a budget that specifies where the money will go. Large, expensive projects include budgetary categories such as personnel, equipment, supplies, and expenses (such as travel, copying, and printing). Even for a more modest project you will pay for yourself, it's a good idea to spend some time anticipating any expenses involved: office supplies, photocopying, computer disks, telephone calls, transportation, and so on.

As you can see, if you are interested in conducting a criminal justice research project, it is a good idea to prepare a research proposal for your own purposes, even if you aren't required to do so by your instructor or a funding agency. If you are going to invest your time and energy in such a project, you should do what you can to ensure a return on that investment.

Knowing Through Experience: Summing Up and Looking Ahead

Empirical research involves measurement and interpretation.

This chapter introduced the foundation of criminal justice research: empirical research, or learning through experience. Doing scientific research in criminal justice is different from the ordinary ways we learn about things because ordinary modes of inquiry have some built-in limits. The coming chapters describe how science tries to overcome such limits and biases.

We also considered the different purposes we may have in mind for conducting criminal justice research, ranging from exploration to examining links between policy action and justice problems.

Our advice on how to design a research project will be useful in two respects. First, it can serve as an annotated outline of what a typical research report would include, a guide for preparing a research report or proposal for this course. Second, Figure 1.1 and our discussion of how to design a research project offer an introduction and overview to later chapters.

Finally, it is helpful to think of criminal justice research as organized around two basic activities: measurement and interpretation. Researchers measure aspects of reality and then draw conclusions about what their measurements mean. All of us are observing all the time, but *scientific measurement* refers to something more deliberate and rigorous. Parts Two and Three of this book describe ways of

structuring observations to produce more deliberate, rigorous measures.

The other key to criminal justice research is interpretation. Much of interpretation is based on data analysis, which is introduced in Part Four. More generally, however, interpretation very much depends on how observations are structured, a point we will encounter repeatedly.

As we put the pieces together—measurement and interpretation—we are in a position to describe, explain, or predict something. And that is what social science is all about.

SUMMARY

- Knowledge of research methods is valuable to criminal justice professionals as consumers and producers of research.
- The study of research methods is the study of how we know what we know.
- Inquiry is a natural human activity for gaining an understanding of the world around us.
- Much of our knowledge is based on agreement rather than direct experience.
- Tradition and authority are important sources of knowledge.
- Empirical research is based on experience and produces knowledge through systematic observation.
- In day-to-day inquiry, we often make mistakes. Science offers protection against such mistakes.
- Whereas people often observe inaccurately, science avoids such errors by making observation a careful and deliberate activity.
- Sometimes we jump to general conclusions on the basis of only a few observations. Scientists avoid overgeneralization through replication.
- Scientists avoid illogical reasoning by being as careful and deliberate in their thinking as in their observations.
- The scientific study of crime guards against, but does not prevent, ideological and political beliefs influencing research findings.
- Different research purposes are exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, and applied.
- The research process is flexible, involving different steps that are best considered together. The process usually begins with some general interest or idea.
- A careful review of previous literature is an essential part of the research process.
- A research proposal provides an overview of why a study will be undertaken and how it will be conducted. It is a useful device for planning and is required in some circumstances.

KEY TERMS

These terms are defined in the chapter where they are set in boldface and can also be found in the glossary at the end of the book.

applied research, p. 11
conceptualization, p. 15
descriptive research, p. 11
empirical, p. 6
explanatory research, p. 11
exploratory research, p. 10
methodology, p. 7
operationalization, p. 15
replication, p. 9

REVIEW QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Review the common errors of personal inquiry discussed in this chapter. Find a mass media or blog article about crime that illustrates one or more of those errors. Discuss how methods of social science might be applied to avoid these errors.
2. Briefly describe examples of descriptive research and applied research about bullying in public schools. What sorts of things would be measured in descriptive and applied research on bullying?
3. Often things we think are true and supported by considerable experience and evidence turn out not to be true, or at least not true with the certainty we expected. Criminal justice seems especially vulnerable to this phenomenon, perhaps because crime and criminal justice policy are so often the subjects of mass and popular media attention. If news stories, movies, and TV shows all point to growing sex trafficking, cybercrime, or gang-related violence, it is easy to assume that these are real problems identified by systematic study. Choose a criminal justice topic or claim that is currently prominent in news stories or entertainment. Then visit the Bureau of Justice Statistics website (http://www.bjs.gov). Search the website for publications or data that provide information about the problem.

CHAPTER 2

Ethics and Criminal Justice Research

We'll examine some of the ethical considerations that must be taken into account, along with the scientific ones, in the design and execution of research. We'll consider different types of ethical issues and ways of handling them.

Ethics and Research with Pimps

by Amber Horning

Human trafficking of women for sex work is a criminal justice topic that has attracted considerable attention in news reports and popular culture. It is also widely reported that young American-born children, often runaways, are coerced into sex work by predatory pimps. Here's an example from a Cleveland newspaper:

> Eric Turnstone warned the buyer that the next time he made a sale to her, he'd charge a lot more. But that day in 2010 he settled for $300, saying it would at least give him some pocket change. What Turnstone sold, inside a Starbucks in Cleveland's Warehouse District, was a 16-year old girl. Yes, that's correct. He *sold* a girl—to a madam in the commercial sex industry.… [I]ncreasingly, pimps are coercing vulnerable teens into the sex trade. They flatter the girls by telling them they're pretty, develop their trust and entice them to leave their families. (Bernstein 2012, emphasis in original)

Mass media accounts typically describe exploitation and sexual slavery. The problem is real of course, but criminal justice research has revealed that the situation is more complex. In their study of sex trafficking in Asia, researchers Ko-Lin Chin and James Finckenauer (2012) interviewed female sex workers in 10 cities in Asian counties and the United States. Among other things, they found that women generally knew they would be sex workers in other countries, and as many as 40 percent of women interviewed in China had worked in prostitution before leaving the country.

The image of pimps as exploiters who use violence and threats to coerce sex workers is similarly oversimplified. A paper that I wrote with Anthony Marcus and colleagues (2012) describes some of our findings in two years of ethnographic research in New York City and Atlantic City, New Jersey. Among other things, we learned that adolescents become involved in sex work for many reasons, and relationships between females and pimps acting as "market facilitators" can be complex. Also, I recently completed a year-long project that involved interviewing former and current sex-market facilitators or pimps in Harlem. I'll have more to say about this work in later chapters. Here I note some of the ethical questions that come up in conducting research on the commercial sex market.

When recruiting and interviewing people from hard-to-reach populations, the first issue was assuring them that the interview was confidential. Those currently pimping were particularly cautious, and in a few cases, they were even worried that I was an undercover police officer. Besides the actual assurance of confidentiality, subjects may also be assured of this based on how they are recruited, whether they are asked to give oral versus written consent, and where the interviews take place.

For the pimp project in Harlem, I drew on a few contacts in the community to identify people to interview. One contact grew up in the area, and another was a regular fixture in the community.

(continued)

They endorsed us as legitimate researchers to their friends, acquaintances, and sometimes even strangers. Our contacts hung around during the interviews, which assured potential subjects that the situation was safe. Contacts were essential for establishing the kind of trust necessary for this type of research.

The ethical principle of voluntary participation can be tricky in research on criminal behaviors or lifestyles. We had to work carefully with our institutional review board. For example, it's customary to have subjects sign a document indicating that they agree to participate in the research. Because the people we interviewed were hesitant to sign anything, we used a type of verbal consent.

Location played a role in establishing trust. I conducted a number of interviews outside around housing projects in Harlem, and inside two nonprofit organizations. I used empty office space in one of the nonprofits, and there wasn't yet any furniture in these offices, with the exception of a few chairs. Further, there were tangled wires sticking out of the ceiling and a phone that occasionally rang. One subject asked us outright if this was a sting operation; questions like this never arose when the interviews were outdoors (which is where most of the interviews took place).

We asked our subjects to use fake names when discussing their sex workers, their friends, and themselves. I told them that if a question made them uncomfortable that they could skip it. For the pimp project, none of the subjects asked to skip a question, but they sometimes edited their own stories, especially when prior arrests/convictions or gang affiliations came up in conversation, saying things like, "I am in a gang, but I don't wanna say which one."

Interviews with sex workers and pimps may reveal sensitive information about trauma, violence, other crime, and prior arrests/convictions. It can also be difficult to verify whether someone is an adult or juvenile. Interviewees may lie about their age, and you cannot ask hard-to-reach populations for identification; you have to trust them. This can be tricky, because research on juveniles requires special protections.

Interviewees can also be enticed by monetary incentives, especially if they are in need of money. We paid subjects $20 to $30 per interview. Despite popular images of pimps living the high life, this was rare among those we encountered; many of them were struggling financially. Interviewees from disenfranchised communities may not qualify as vulnerable by institutional review board standards, but may be essentially vulnerable, and researchers should keep this in mind.

Finally, many ethical issues in criminal justice research are concerned with protecting vulnerable populations. Our subjects were vulnerable in multiple, complex ways. Working in the commercial sex market, they engaged in illegal behavior that was often intertwined with other illegal markets. We suspect that some were juveniles, but could not verify ages. Many subjects lived and worked in communities troubled by violence and drug markets.

As you read about research ethics in this chapter, think about how my research with pimps and sex workers raises questions about ethics. Also consider how research should be structured to comply with basic principles of ethics. What sorts of protection should be provided to subjects? Who should determine whether those protections are adequate? How should they do that?

Introduction

Despite our best intentions, we don't always recognize ethical issues in research.

Most of this book focuses on scientific procedures and constraints. We'll see that the logic of science suggests certain research procedures, but we'll also see that some scientifically "perfect" study designs are not feasible, because they would be too expensive or take too long to execute. Throughout the book, we'll deal with workable compromises.

Before we get to scientific and practical constraints on research, it's important to explore another essential consideration in doing criminal justice research in the real world—ethics. Just as certain designs or measurement procedures are impractical, others are constrained by ethical problems.

All of us consider ourselves ethical—not perfect perhaps, but more ethical than most of humanity. The problem in criminal justice research—and probably in life—is that ethical considerations are not always apparent to us. As a result, we often plunge into things without seeing ethical issues that may be obvious to others and even to ourselves when they are pointed out. Our excitement at the prospect of a new research project may blind us to obstacles that ethical considerations present.

Any of us can immediately see that a study that requires juvenile gang members to demonstrate how they steal cars is unethical. You'd speak out immediately if we suggested interviewing people about drug use and then publishing what they said in the local newspaper. But, as ethical as we think we are, we are likely to miss the ethical issues in other situations—not because we're bad, but because we're human.

Ethical Issues in Criminal Justice Research

A few basic principles encompass the variety of ethical issues in criminal justice research.

In most dictionaries and in common usage, ethics is typically associated with morality, and both deal with matters of right and wrong. But what is right and what is wrong? What is the source of the distinction? Depending on the individual, sources vary from religion to political ideology to pragmatic observations of what seems to work and what doesn't.

Webster's New World Dictionary (4th ed.) is typical among dictionaries in defining **ethical** as "conforming to the standards of conduct of a given profession or group." Although the relativity embedded in this definition may frustrate those in search of moral absolutes, what we regard as moral and ethical in day-to-day life is no more than a matter of agreement among members of a group. And, not surprisingly, different groups have agreed on different ethical codes of conduct. If someone is going to live in a particular society, it is extremely useful to know what that society considers ethical and unethical. The same holds true for the criminal justice research "community."

Anyone preparing to do criminal justice research should be aware of the general agreements shared by researchers about what's proper and improper in the conduct of scientific inquiry. Ethical issues in criminal justice can be especially challenging because our research questions frequently address illegal behavior that people are anxious to conceal. This is true of offenders and, sometimes, people who work in criminal justice agencies.

The sections that follow explore some of the more important ethical issues and agreements in criminal justice research. Our discussion is restricted to ethical issues in research, not in policy or practice. Thus, we will not consider such issues as the morality of the death penalty, acceptable police practices, the ethics of punishment, or codes of conduct for attorneys and judges. If you are interested in substantive ethical issues in criminal justice policy, consult Jocelyn Pollock (2012) for an introduction.

No Harm to Participants

Weighing the potential benefits from doing research against the possibility of harm to the people being studied—or harm to other people—is a fundamental ethical dilemma in all research. For example, biomedical research can involve potential

physical harm to people or animals. Social research may cause psychological harm or embarrassment in people who are asked to reveal information about themselves. Criminal justice research has the potential to produce both physical and psychological harm, as well as embarrassment. Although the likelihood of physical harm may seem remote, it is worthwhile to consider possible ways it might occur.

Harm to subjects, researchers, or third parties is possible in field studies that collect information from or about persons engaged in criminal activity; this is especially true for field research. For example, studies of drug crimes may involve locating and interviewing active users and dealers. Scott Jacques and Richard Wright (2008) studied active drug sellers in Atlanta and St. Louis, recruiting subjects by spreading the word through various means. Collecting such information from active criminals presents at least the possibility of violence against research subjects by other drug dealers.

Potential danger to field researchers should also be considered. For instance, Peter Reuter and associates (1990) selected their drug-dealer subjects by consulting probation department records. The researchers recognized that sampling persons from different Washington, D.C., neighborhoods would have produced a more generalizable group of subjects, but they rejected that approach because mass media reports of widespread drug-related violence generated concern about the safety of research staff (Reuter, MacCoun, and Murphy 1990, 119). Whether such fears were warranted is unclear, but this example does illustrate how safety issues can affect criminal justice research. More generally, Paterson, Gregory, and Thorne (1999) describe guidelines for assessing possible threats to researcher safety in qualitative field research.

Other researchers acknowledge the potential for harm in the context of respect for ethical principles. The box titled "Ethics and Extreme Field Research" gives examples of subtle and not-so-subtle ethical dilemmas encountered by a Rutgers University graduate in her study of drug use in rave clubs. For more information on this research, see Dina Perrone's book, *The High Life* (Perrone 2009).

More generally, John Monahan and associates (1993) distinguish three different groups at potential risk of physical harm in their research on violence. First are research subjects themselves. Women at risk of domestic violence may be exposed to greater danger if assailants learn they have disclosed past victimizations to researchers. Second, researchers might trigger attacks on themselves when they interview subjects who have a history of violent offending. Third, and most problematic, is the possibility that collecting information from unstable individuals might increase the risk of harm to third parties. The last category presents a new dilemma if researchers learn that subjects intend to attack some third party. Should researchers honor a promise of confidentiality to subjects or intervene to prevent the harm?

The potential for psychological harm to subjects exists when interviews are used to collect information. Crime surveys that ask respondents about their experiences as victims of crime may remind them of a traumatic, or at least an unpleasant, experience. Surveys may also ask respondents about illegal behaviors such as drug use or crimes they have committed. Talking about such actions with interviewers can be embarrassing.

Researchers have taken special steps to reduce the potential for emotional trauma in interviews of domestic violence victims (Black et al. 2011). One of the most interesting examples involves the use of self-completed computer questionnaires in the British Crime Survey (Mirrlees-Black 1999). Rather than verbally respond to questions from interviewers, respondents read and answer questions on a laptop computer. This procedure affords a greater degree of privacy for research subjects.

Recent developments in the use of crime mapping software have raised concerns about the privacy of crime victims. Many police departments now use some type of computer-driven crime map, and some have made maps of small areas available to the public on the web. Researchers and police alike must recognize the potential for such problems before publishing or otherwise displaying detailed crime maps. Kounadi, Bowers, and Leitner (2014) discuss how the increased availability of online crime maps produces concerns for privacy by making it possible for people to identify where crime victims live.

Crime maps for many cities can be found on the following website: http://www.crimemapping.com.

By now, it should be apparent that virtually all research runs some risk of harming other people somehow. A researcher can never completely guard against all possible injuries, yet some study designs make harm more likely than others. If a particular research procedure seems likely to produce unpleasant effects for subjects, such as asking survey respondents to report deviant behavior, the researcher should have firm scientific grounds for using that procedure. If researchers pursue a design that is essential and also likely to be unpleasant for subjects, they will find themselves in an ethical netherworld, forced to do some personal agonizing.

Ethics and Extreme Field Research

by Dina Perrone
California State University, Long Beach

As a female ethnographer studying active drug use in a New York dance club, I have encountered awkward and difficult situations. The main purpose of my research was to study the use of ecstasy and other drugs in rave club settings. I became a participant observer in an all-night dance club (The Plant) where the use of club drugs was common. I covertly observed activities in the club, partly masking my role as a researcher by assuming the role of club-goer.

Though I was required to comply with university institutional review board guidelines, published codes and regulations offered limited guidance for many of the situations I experienced. As a result, I had to use my best judgment, learning from past experiences to make immediate decisions regarding ethical issues. I was forced to make decisions about how to handle drug episodes, so as not to place my research or my informants in any danger. Because my research was conducted in a dance club that is also a place for men to pick up women, I faced problems in getting information from subjects while watching out for my physical safety.

Drug Episodes and Subject Safety

I witnessed many drug episodes—adverse reactions to various club drugs—in my visits to The Plant. I watched groups trying to get their friends out of K-holes resulting from ketamine, or Special K. I even aided a subject throwing up. Being a covert observer made it difficult to handle these episodes. There were times in the club when I felt as though I was the only person not under the influence of a mind-altering substance. This led me to believe that I had better judgment than the other patrons. Getting involved in these episodes, however, risked jeopardizing my research.

During my first observation, I tried to intervene in what appeared to be a serious drug episode but was warned off by an informant. I was new to the club and unsure what would happen if I got involved. If I sought help from club staff or outsiders in dealing with acute drug reactions, patrons as well as the bouncers would begin to question why I kept coming there. I needed to gain the trust of the patrons to enlist participants in my research. Furthermore, the bouncers could throw me out of the club, fearing I was a troublemaker who would summon authorities.

As a researcher, I have an ethical responsibility to my participants, and as a human being, I have an ethical responsibility to my conscience. I decided to be extra cautious during my research and to pay close attention to how drug episodes are handled. I would first consult my informants and follow their suggestions. But if I ever thought a person suffering a drug episode was at risk while other patrons were neither able nor inclined to help, I would intervene to the best of my ability.

Sexual Advances in the Dance Club

The Plant is also partly a "meat market." Unlike most bars and dance clubs, the patrons' attire and the dance club entertainment are highly erotic. Most of the males inside the club are shirtless, and the majority of females wear extremely revealing clothes. In staged performances, males and females perform dances with sexual overtones, and clothing is partly shed. This atmosphere promotes sexual encounters; men frequently approach single women in search of a mate. Men had a tendency to approach me—I appeared to be unattached, and because of my research role, I made it a point to talk to as many people as possible. It's not difficult to imagine how this behavior could be misinterpreted.

There were times when men became sexually aggressive and persistent. In most instances, I walked

(continued)

away, and the men usually got the hint. However, some men are more persistent than others, especially when they are on ecstasy. In situations in which men make sexual advances, Terry Williams and colleagues (1992) suggest developing a trusting relationship with key individuals who can play a protective role. Throughout my research, I established a good rapport with my informants, who assumed that protective role. Unfortunately, acting in this role had the potential to place my informants in physically dangerous circumstances.

During one observation, "Tom" grabbed me after I declined his invitation to dance. Tom persisted, grabbed me again, and then began to argue with "Jerry," one of my regular informants, who came to my aid. This escalated to a fistfight broken up only after two bouncers ejected Tom from the club.

I had placed my informant and myself in a dangerous situation. Although I tried to convince myself that I really had no control over Jerry's actions, I felt responsible for the fight. A basic principle of field research is to not invite harm to participants. In most criminal justice research, harm is associated mainly with the possibility of arrest or psychological harm from discussing private issues. Afterward, I tried to think about how the incident escalated and how I could prevent similar problems in the future.

Ethical Decision Rules Evolving from Experience

Academic associations have formulated codes of ethics and professional conduct, but limited guidance is available for handling issues that arise in some types of ethnographic research. Instead, like criminal justice practitioners, those researchers have to make immediate decisions based on experience and training, without knowing how a situation will unfold. Throughout my research, I found myself in situations that I would normally avoid and would probably never confront. Should I help the woman over there get through a drug episode? If I don't, will she be okay? If I walk away from this aggressive guy, will he follow me? Does he understand that I wanted to talk to him just for research?

The approach I developed to tackle these issues was mostly gained by consulting with colleagues and reading other studies. An overarching theme regarding all codes of ethics is that ethnographers must put the safety and interests of their participants first, and they must recognize that their informants are more knowledgeable about many situations than they are. Throughout the research, I used my judgment to make the best decisions possible when handling these situations. To decide when to intervene during drug episodes, I followed the lead of my informants. Telling men that my informant was my boyfriend and walking away were successful tactics in turning away sexual advances.

As a general principle, possible harm to subjects may be justified if the potential benefits of the study outweigh the harm. Of course, this raises a further question of how to determine whether possible benefits offset possible harms. There is no simple answer, but as we will see, the research community has adopted certain safeguards that help subjects to make such determinations themselves.

Not harming people is an easy norm to accept in theory, but it is often difficult to ensure in practice. Sensitivity to the issue and experience in research methodology, however, should improve researchers' efforts in delicate areas of inquiry. Review Dina Perrone's observations in the box "Ethics and Extreme Field Research" for examples.

Voluntary Participation

Criminal justice research often intrudes into people's lives. The interviewer's telephone call or the arrival of a questionnaire via e-mail signals the beginning of an activity that respondents have not requested and that may require a significant portion of their time and energy. Being selected to participate in any sort of research study disrupts subjects' regular activities.

A major tenet of medical research ethics is that experimental participation must be voluntary. The same norm applies to research in criminal justice. No one should be forced to participate. But this norm is far easier to accept in theory than to apply in practice.

For example, prisoners are sometimes used as subjects in experimental studies. In the most rigorously ethical cases, prisoners are told the nature—and the possible dangers—of the experiment; they are told that participation is completely voluntary; and they are further instructed that they can expect no special rewards (such as early parole) for participation. Even under these conditions, volunteers often are motivated by the belief that they will personally benefit from their cooperation. In other

cases, prisoners—or other subjects—may be offered small cash payments in exchange for participation. To people with very low incomes, small payments may be an incentive to participate in a study they would not otherwise endure. Amber Horning notes this point in the opening vignette in her discussion of research on pimps.

When an instructor in an introductory criminal justice class asks students to fill out a questionnaire that she or he plans to analyze and publish, students should always be told that their participation in the survey is completely voluntary. Even so, students might fear that nonparticipation will somehow affect their grade. The instructor should therefore be especially sensitive to the implied sanctions and make provisions to obviate them, such as allowing students to drop the questionnaires in a box near the door prior to the next class.

Notice how this norm of voluntary participation works against a number of scientific concerns or goals. In the most general terms, the goal of generalizability is threatened if experimental subjects or survey respondents are only the people who willingly participate. The same is true when subjects' participation can be bought with small payments. Research results may not be generalizable to all kinds of people. Most clearly, in the case of a descriptive study, a researcher cannot generalize the study findings to an entire population unless a substantial majority of a scientifically selected sample actually participates—both the willing respondents and the somewhat unwilling.

Qualitative interviewing and field research (Chapters 8 and 9) face ethical dilemmas in this regard. Often, a researcher who conducts observations in the field cannot even reveal that a study is being done, for fear that this revelation might significantly affect what is being studied. Imagine that you are interested in whether the way stereo headphones are displayed in a discount store affects rates of shoplifting. Therefore, you plan a field study in which you will make observations of store displays and shoplifting. You cannot very well ask all shoppers whether they agree to participate in your study.

The norm of voluntary participation is an important one, but it is sometimes impossible to follow. In cases in which researchers ultimately feel justified in violating it, it is all the more important to observe the other ethical norms of scientific research.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

The clearest concern in the protection of the subjects' interests and well-being is the protection of their identity. If revealing their behavior or responses would injure them in any way, adherence to this norm becomes crucial. Two techniques—anonymity and confidentiality—assist researchers in this regard, although the two are often confused.

Anonymity A research subject is considered anonymous when the researcher cannot associate a given piece of information with the person. **Anonymity** addresses many potential ethical difficulties. Studies that use field observation techniques are often able to ensure that research subjects cannot be identified. Researchers may also gain access to nonpublic records from courts, corrections departments, or other criminal justice agencies in which the names of persons have been removed.

One example of anonymity is a web-based survey where no login or other identifying information is required. Respondents anonymously complete online questionnaires that are then tabulated. Likewise, a telephone survey is anonymous if residential phone numbers are selected at random and respondents are not asked for identifying information. Interviews with subjects in the field are anonymous if the researchers neither ask for nor record the names of subjects.

Assuring anonymity makes it difficult to keep track of which sampled respondents have been interviewed, because researchers did not record their names. Nevertheless, in some situations, the price of anonymity is worth paying. In a survey of drug use, for example, we may decide that the likelihood and accuracy of responses will be enhanced by guaranteeing anonymity. A useful compromise is to record street names for subjects, as Amber Horning describes in the opening vignette, "Ethics and Research with Pimps."

Respondents in many surveys cannot be considered anonymous because an interviewer collects the information from individuals whose names and addresses are known. Other means of data collection may similarly make it impossible to guarantee anonymity for subjects. If we wished to examine juvenile arrest records for a sample of ninth-grade students, we would need to know their names even though we might not be interviewing them or having them fill out a questionnaire.

Confidentiality A researcher who is able to link information with a given person's identity but promises not to is providing **confidentiality**. In a survey of self-reported drug use, the researcher is in a position to make public the use of illegal drugs by a given respondent, but the respondent is assured that this will not be done. Similarly, if field interviews are conducted with juvenile gang members, researchers can certify that information will not be disclosed to police or other officials. Studies using court or police records that include individuals' names may protect confidentiality by not including any identifying information.

Some techniques ensure better performance on this guarantee. To begin, field or survey interviewers who have access to respondent identifications should be trained in their ethical responsibilities. As soon as possible, all names and addresses should be removed from data collection forms and replaced by identification numbers. A master identification file should be created linking numbers to names to permit the later correction of missing or contradictory information.

Whenever a survey is confidential rather than anonymous, it is the researcher's responsibility to make that fact clear to respondents. He or she must never use the term *anonymous* to mean *confidential*. Note, however, that research subjects and others may not understand the difference. For example, a former assistant attorney general in New Jersey once demanded that Michael Maxfield disclose the identities of police officers who participated in an anonymous study. It required repeated explanations of the difference between *anonymous* and *confidential* before the lawyer finally understood that it was not possible to identify participants who were anonymous. In any event, subjects should be assured that the information they provide will be used for research purposes only and not be disclosed to third parties.

Deceiving Subjects

We've seen that the handling of subjects' identities is an important ethical consideration. Handling our own identity as researchers can be tricky, too. Sometimes it's useful and even necessary to identify ourselves as researchers to those we want to study. It would take a master con artist to get people to participate in a laboratory experiment or complete a lengthy questionnaire without letting on that research was being conducted. We should also keep in mind that deceiving people is unethical; in criminal justice research, deception needs to be justified by compelling scientific or administrative concerns.

Sometimes, researchers admit that they are doing research but fudge about why they are doing it or for whom. Cathy Spatz Widom and associates interviewed victims of child abuse some 15 years after their cases had been heard in criminal or juvenile courts (Widom, Weiler, and Cotler 1999). Widom was interested in whether child abuse victims were more likely than a comparison group of nonvictims to have used illegal drugs. Interviewers could not explain the purpose of the study without potentially biasing responses. Still, it was necessary to provide a plausible explanation for asking detailed questions about personal and family experiences. Widom's solution was to inform subjects that they had been selected to participate in a study of human development. She also prepared a brochure describing her research on human development that was distributed to respondents.

Deception is sometimes used in experimental studies, but subjects usually eventually learn they were deceived. For example, Raymond Paternoster and associates (2013) studied whether students who witnessed staged cheating on a course assignment were more likely to cheat themselves compared to students who were not exposed to staged cheating. After the experiment was completed, participants were "debriefed" and informed about the deception:

> If you were a participant in the memory/recall study that took place in the computer labs of LeFrak Hall, the experiment involved an element of deception. You were recruited under the idea that the study was about your ability to remember and recall words. The actual purpose of the study was to examine the effect of peers on cheating behavior. There was a confederate of the researcher in the sessions, who was a professional actor hired by the researcher. (Paternoster et al. 2013, 496)

Although we might initially think that concealing our research purpose by deception would be particularly useful in studying active offenders, James Inciardi (1993), in describing methods for studying "crack houses," makes a convincing case that this is inadvisable. First, concealing our research role when investigating drug dealers and users implies that we are associating with them for the purpose of obtaining illegal drugs. Faced with this situation, a researcher would have the choice of engaging in illegal behavior or offering a convincing explanation for declining to do so. Second, masquerading as a crack-house patron would expose the researcher to the considerable danger of violence that was found to be common in such places. Because the choice of committing illegal acts or becoming a victim of violence is really no choice at all, Inciardi (1993, 152) advises researchers who study active offenders in field settings: "Don't go undercover."

Analysis and Reporting

As criminal justice researchers, we have ethical obligations to our subjects of study. At the same time, we have ethical obligations to our colleagues in the scientific community; a few comments on those obligations are in order. In any rigorous study, the researcher should be more familiar than anyone else with the technical shortcomings and failures of the study. Researchers have an obligation to make those shortcomings known to readers. Even though it's natural to feel foolish admitting mistakes, researchers are ethically obligated to do so.

Any negative findings should be reported. There is an unfortunate myth in social scientific reporting that only positive discoveries are worth reporting. As editor of the *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Michael Maxfield confesses to being sometimes guilty of believing that as well. This is not restricted to social science. Helle Krogh Johansen and Peter Gotzsche (1999) describe how published research on new drugs tends to focus on successful experiments. Unsuccessful research on new formulations is less often published, which leads pharmaceutical researchers to repeat studies of drugs already shown to be ineffective. Largely because of this bias, researchers at the Harvard University School of Dental Medicine have established the *Journal of Negative Observations in Biomedicine*, dedicated to publishing negative findings from biomedical research (http://www.jnrbm.com). In social science, as in medical research, it is often as important to know that two things are not related as to know that they are.

In general, science progresses through honesty and openness, and is retarded by ego defenses and deception. We can serve our fellow researchers—and the scientific community as a whole—by telling the truth about all the pitfalls and problems experienced in a particular line of inquiry. With luck, this will save others from the same problems.

Legal Liability

Two types of ethical problems expose researchers to potential legal liability. To illustrate the first, assume you are making field observations of criminal activity, such as street prostitution, that is not reported to police. Under criminal law in many states, you might be arrested for obstructing justice or being an accessory to a crime. Potentially more troublesome is the situation in which participant observation of crime or deviance draws researchers into criminal or deviant roles themselves, such as smuggling cigarettes into a lockup in order to obtain the cooperation of detainees.

The second and more common potential source of legal problems involves knowledge that research subjects have committed illegal acts. Self-report surveys or field interviews may ask subjects about crimes they have committed. If respondents

report committing offenses they have never been arrested for or charged with, the researcher's knowledge of them might be construed as obstruction of justice. Or research data may be subject to subpoena by a criminal court. Because disclosure of research data that could be traced to individual subjects violates the ethical principle of confidentiality, a new dilemma emerges.

Fortunately, federal law protects researchers from legal action in most circumstances, provided that appropriate safeguards are used to protect research data. Research plans for 2002 published by organizations in the Office of Justice Programs summarized this protection: "[Research] information and copies thereof shall be immune from legal process, and shall not, without the consent of the person furnishing such information, be admitted as evidence or used for any purpose in any action, suit, or other judicial, legislative, or administrative proceedings" (42 U.S. Code §22.28a). This not only protects researchers from legal action but also can be valuable in assuring subjects that they cannot be prosecuted for crimes they describe to an interviewer or field worker. Note that such immunity requires confidential information to be protected. We have already discussed the principle of confidentiality, so this bargain should be an easy one to keep.

Somewhere between legal liability and physical danger lies the potential risk to field researchers from law enforcement. Despite being upfront with crack users about his role as a researcher, Inciardi (1993) points out that police could not be expected to distinguish him from his subjects. Visibly associating with offenders in natural settings brings some risk of being arrested or inadvertently being an accessory to crime. On one occasion, Inciardi fled the scene of a robbery and on another was caught up in a crack-house raid. Another example is the account Bruce Jacobs (1996) gives of his contacts with police while he was studying street drug dealers.

Special Problems

Certain types of criminal justice studies present special ethical problems in addition to those we have mentioned. Applied research, for example, may evaluate some existing or new program. Evaluations frequently have the potential to disrupt the routine operations of agencies being studied. Obviously, it is best to minimize such interferences whenever possible.

Staff Misbehavior While conducting applied research, researchers may become aware of irregular or illegal practices by staff in public agencies. They are then faced with the ethical question of whether to report such information. For example, investigators conducting an evaluation of an innovative probation program learned that police visits to the residences of probationers were not taking place as planned. Instead, police assigned to the program had been submitting falsified log sheets and had not actually checked on probationers.

What is the ethical dilemma in this case? On the one hand, researchers were evaluating the probation program and so were obliged to report reasons it did or did not operate as planned. Failure to deliver program treatments (home visits) is an example of a program not operating as planned. Investigators had guaranteed confidentiality to program clients—the offenders assigned to probation—but no such agreement had been struck with program staff. On the other hand, researchers had assured agency personnel that their purpose was to evaluate the probation program, not individuals' job performance. If researchers disclosed their knowledge that police were falsifying reports, they would violate this implied trust.

What would you have done in this situation? We will tell you what the researchers decided at the end of this chapter (see page 45). You should recognize, however, how applied research in criminal justice agencies can involve a variety of ethical issues.

Research Causes Crime Because criminal acts and their circumstances are complex and imperfectly understood, some research projects have the potential to produce crime or influence its location or target. Certainly, this is a potentially serious ethical issue for researchers.