CHAPTER 1:

Crime, Criminal Justice, and Scientific Inquiry
• Criminal Justice professionals are both consumers and producers of research

• It is important for Criminal Justice professionals to be informed consumers of research

• Need to understand findings and how to apply those findings to his or her department
• Experiential reality – The things we know from direct experience (e.g. learning that a burner is hot by touching a stove)

• Agreement reality – Things we consider real because we have been told they are real, and everyone agrees (e.g., sun sets in the West)

• Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment revealed the agreement reality that simply increasing patrols decreased crime was misleading
THE ROLE OF SCIENCE

• Empirical research - Knowledge produced based on experience or observation

• Scientists have certain criteria to be met when accepting experiential and agreement realities
  • An assertion must have both logical and empirical support

• Methodology - The science of finding out
• Future circumstances are caused or conditioned by present ones

• We use **causal** and **probabilistic** reasoning

• The goal is to understand why certain things are related, why patterns occur, to enable us to make more accurate predictions
• **Tradition** – Things that “everybody knows”
  • Ex: Driving on the left side of the road in the US is dangerous

• **Authority** – Trusting the judgment of someone with special expertise
  • Ex: You are more likely to believe a judge regarding your driver’s license suspension than your parents

• Both provide us with a starting point for our own inquiry
SAFEGUARDING AGAINST ERRORS IN PERSONAL HUMAN INQUIRY

• Inaccurate Observation – Overcome by using measurement devices

• Overgeneralization – Overcome by replicating the study to see if you get the same results

• Selective Observation – Specify in advance the number and types of observations
SAFEGUARDING AGAINST ERRORS IN PERSONAL HUMAN INQUIRY

• **Illogical Reasoning** – Use systems of logic, consciously and explicitly

• **Ideology and Politics** – Guard against its influence

• **To Err is Human** – Take precautions to avoid error
PURPOSES OF RESEARCH: EXPLORATION

• Examine an issue or policy about which little is known

• Might also collect data on some measure to serve as a baseline for later comparisons

• Appropriate when some type of policy change is being considered

• May be simple or complex and can use a variety of methods
PURPOSES OF RESEARCH: DESCRIPTION

• Observe and describe the scope of a problem or policy response
• Make more accurate and formal observations
• Often concerned with counting or documenting observations; exploratory studies focus more on developing a preliminary understanding
  • Example: US Census, UCR
• Following exploration, we want to know the problem’s frequency/prevalence/degree/scope
PURPOSES OF RESEARCH: EXPLANATION

• Explain things – answers “why?”

• Why have we seen a certain change in scope?

• Why does a certain problem exist?
  • Ex: Why do some people write computer viruses?, Why do some people assault their spouses?
• **Applied research** is often used to evaluate the effects of specific criminal justice programs.

• Two major types of applied research:
  • **Evaluation research** – Comparing program goals to results
  • **Policy analysis** – Prospective – Anticipate future consequences of alternative actions
One of the most difficult parts of the research process is framing your interest into a research question.

Researchers often have to rework or clarify research problems as they learn more about a topic.

Researchers should begin with their own experiences and observations and then learn more about the existing research.
• Tells you what is know and what is unknown
• Keep notes of articles as you review them
• Begin with a book or article on your topic
• This is your source document
• Find sources that are cited in the source document and find other sources that have cited your source document
• Reading an article
  • Start with the abstract - It will tell you if the article is relevant to your study
  • Next, read the summary and conclusions
  • Skim the article paying attention to headings, tables and graphs
  • Carefully read the entire article
  • Ask for help if you do not understand the article
• Reading a book-length report

• Start with the preface — It will tell you if the article is relevant to your study

• Skim the book paying attention to the organization, headings, tables, graphs, and major findings

• Read it closely while taking notes

• If you decide to read the book, repeat the process with each chapter
Research proposals describe the activities planned and include a budget and timeline.

Certain agencies might have specific requirements for a proposal.

Almost every proposal includes some basic elements.
BASIC ELEMENTS OF A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

• Problem or Objective — Describes what will be studied
• Literature Review — Summarizes the prior research on the topic
• Research Questions — Specifies what the research will answer
• Subjects for Study — Whom or what will be studied
• Measurement — Identifies the key variables of the study
• Data Collection Methods — Explains how observations will be collected
• Analysis — Specifies how the observations will be analyzed
• References — List of materials consulted and cited in the proposal
• Schedule — A timeline for the various stages of the proposal
• Budget — Specifies where money to support the research will be spent