

SECTION I

Functions

Research: What, Why, and How

What You Should Know!

Research methods for many graduate and undergraduate students can be misleading, confusing, and frustrating. The subject is often taught or presented in a manner where students may think that they are going to be social science researchers, actually conducting research. In reality, however, most students conduct little to no actual research but instead are consumers of research. That is, they read studies conducted by others perhaps hoping to apply to or better understand an area with which they may be working. Before being able to conduct research one should be able to understand the basics of research. Therefore, from this chapter the reader should be able to do the following:

1. Discuss tradition and authority as sources of human learning and be able to contrast their strengths and weaknesses.
2. Present and discuss the errors that plague casual observation.
3. Define what is meant by the scientific method. Explain how it seeks to remedy the errors of casual observation.
4. Compare and contrast the relationship between theory and research within the inductive and deductive logic processes.
5. Define research and explain its purpose.
6. Compare and contrast basic, applied, and multipurpose research.
7. Present and discuss the various types of research.
8. Present and discuss the reasons for criminologic research.

9. Present and discuss the various factors that influence research decisions.
10. Describe the primary steps in conducting research.

The Nature of Scientific Inquiry

It seems not that long ago that the authors were criminal justice students taking a first course in research methods. Our thoughts were, if we want to be police officers, why do we have to take this course? This is even worse than criminal theory, another useless course. What does it have to do with the real world in which we want to work? Later police experience in that real world taught us the value of both theory and research in the field of criminal justice. When we subsequently returned to school for graduate studies, the importance of theory and research was more readily apparent. We had learned that scientific investigation is very similar to criminal investigation: the use of a logical order and established procedures to solve real-world problems.

Social Science Research and the Real World

As police officers, the authors sought to determine whether a crime had been committed (what occurred and when it occurred); who had done it; how they had done it; and why they had done it. We then sought to use that investigatory knowledge to develop a successful prosecution of the offender. Our endeavors in the field taught us that the theory course that we had grudgingly endured had provided the rationale for human behavior on which the strategies of policing, courts, and corrections were based. We also discovered that those theories were not developed in some esoteric vacuum. They were the products of trial-and-error experiments conducted in policing, the courts, and corrections that had been refined and reapplied to their appropriate subject area. Today's police-deployment strategies, legal processes, and correctional techniques are all solidly based on prior theory and research.

These statements can also be applied to social science research in general. Typical real world conclusions are often flawed because of a number of issues that cause one's observations and reasoning to be inaccurate. The scientific method seeks to provide a means of investigation to correct (or at least limit) the inaccuracies of ordinary human inquiry (Adler & Clark, 2007; Bachman & Schutt, 2008; Kline, 2009). How one interprets their own observations and what one learns from others is based on tradition and authority. Tradition is the cultural teaching about the real world. "Poisonous snakes are dangerous. Beware of them!" You do not have to be bitten by a rattlesnake to appreciate its hazard. You have been taught by other members of your culture to respect the threat. This is an example of positive learning from tradition. It is based on the experiences of others in society who passed their knowledge on to others. Unfortunately, knowledge based on tradition is often erroneous. For example:

“Women are not suited to be police officers. They are too weak and too emotional.” A multitude of highly competent and professional police officers have proved this sexist stereotype to be a fallacy.

The other source of secondhand knowledge is authority (Kraska & Neuman, 2008; Lavrakas, 2008; Maxfield & Babbie, 2009). Authority refers to new knowledge that is provided from the observations of others whom one respects. The cool aunt or uncle or older cousin who explained the facts of life to you was an authority figure. How accurate their explanations were, we leave to you to decide. As you got older you learned that much free advice was worth what you paid for it and that a great deal of bought advice also had little value. The importance of knowledge gained from authority figures depends on their qualifications relative to the subject being discussed. Therefore, one goes to a physician for help with health problems, and hires a plumber to fix a broken water pipe. These individuals are expected to have the expertise to provide solutions that laypersons do not have. Like tradition, the knowledge gained from dealings with authority figures can be extremely accurate or highly erroneous.

Science Versus Casual Inquiry

Casual inquiry is influenced by the sources of knowledge discussed in the previous section. In addition, there are other pitfalls that create errors in one's observations. It has been indicated that casual inquiry may be flawed because of inaccurate observation, overgeneralization, selective observation, and illogical reasoning (Kraska & Neuman, 2008; Lavrakas, 2008; Maxfield & Babbie, 2009).

Inaccurate observation occurs when conclusions are made based on hasty or incomplete observations. As an example, a young police officer once walked by a break room where a young records clerk was in tears. Sitting on each side of her were the captain in charge of internal affairs and an internal affairs investigator. The captain was telling her to stop crying in a harsh tone of voice. The officer immediately thought, “Those jerks. They could have at least taken her into their office before interrogating her.” Several years later, the officer, then a sergeant for whom the woman in question now worked, learned that she had been extremely distraught over the break-up of her marriage and that the captain was a father figure to her who had actually been providing consolation.

Overgeneralization occurs when conclusions are made about individuals or groups based on knowledge of similar individuals or groups. “All lawyers are liars!” is an example. Despite the preponderance of lawyer jokes and any bad experiences one may have had with an attorney, one cannot accurately make that conclusion about all attorneys. There are simply too many attorneys (men and women of honesty and integrity and those of questionable ethics) to make such a conclusion without an individual knowledge of the person.

Selective observation is when one sees only those things that one wants to see. Racial and ethnic stereotyping is an example of negative selective observation. The attitude that “all whites are racists who seek to oppress” may cause the observer to see what he or she believes in the behaviors of all European Americans with whom they come into contact. Selective observation may also be positively biased. “My darling wonderful child has never done anything like that.” Such selective observation can lead to major disappointment, such as when “He’s a wonderful man who caters to my every whim” becomes “He’s a selfish jerk who doesn’t ever consider my feelings.”

Finally, illogical reasoning happens when one decides that despite past observations, the future will be different. For example, the individual who plays the lottery week after week believing that eventually he has to win is an example of illogical reasoning. If the odds of success are unlikely, it is illogical to assume that by sheer willpower it can be made to occur.

Science seeks to reduce the possibility of the previously mentioned errors occurring by imposing order and rigor on observations. The means of doing so is the application of the scientific method.

The Scientific Method

The scientific method seeks to prevent errors of casual inquiry by using procedures that specify objectivity, logic, theoretical understanding, and knowledge of prior research in the development and use of a precise measurement instrument designed to record observations accurately (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2008; Gavin, 2008; McBurney & White, 2007). The result is a systematic search for the most accurate and complete description or explanation of the events or behaviors that are being studied. Just as a criminal investigation is a search for “the facts” and a criminal trial is a search for “the truth,” the scientific method is a search for knowledge. The criminologic researcher seeks to use the principles of empiricism, skepticism, relativism, objectivity, ethical neutrality, parsimony, accuracy, and precision to assess a particular theoretical explanation.

In the previously mentioned formula, “empiricism” is defined as seeking answers to questions through direct observation. “Skepticism” is the search for disconfirming evidence and the process of continuing to question the conclusions and the evidence that are found. “Objectivity” mandates that conclusions are based on careful observation that sees the world as it really is, free from personal feelings or prejudices. Criminologic researchers often acknowledge that total objectivity is unattainable but every reasonable effort is made to overcome any subjective interests that might influence research outcomes. This is known as “intersubjectivity.” Ethical neutrality builds on objectivity by stressing that the researcher’s beliefs or preferences are not allowed to influence the research process or its outcomes. “Parsimony” is the attempt to

reduce the sum of possible explanations for an event or phenomenon to the smallest possible number. “Accuracy” requires that observations be recorded in a correct manner exactly as they occurred. “Precision” is specifying the number of subcategories of a concept that are available (Adler & Clark, 2007; Maxfield & Babbie, 2009; Vito, Kunselman, & Tewksbury, 2008).

The Relationship Between Theory and Research

As was discussed in a prior section, the practice of criminal justice is based on theories about the causes of crime and how to respond to them. Criminology is an academic discipline that studies the nature of crime, its causes, its consequences, and society’s response to the crime. Criminal justice as an academic discipline tends to focus more on the creation, application, and enforcement of criminal laws to maintain social order. There is so much of an overlap between the two disciplines that within this text we deal with the two as one discipline (as indeed many criminologists and justices consider them to be). Regardless of the reader’s orientation, theory is integral in the development of research. Likewise, theory that has been validated by research is the basis for practice in the criminal justice system.

Theory

Theory suggests how something should be (Bachman & Schutt, 2008; Bickman & Rog, 2009; Bryman, 2008; Kraska & Neuman, 2008; Lavrakas, 2008; Maxfield & Babbie, 2009). Personal ideologies are of no value in criminologic theory unless they can be evaluated scientifically. We define theory as “an attempt to explain why a particular social activity or event occurs.” A theory is a generalization about the phenomenon being studied. From this broad theory, more precise statements (concepts) are developed. Specific measurable statements are “hypotheses.” It is through observation and measurement that the validity (correctness or ability accurately to predict what it seeks to examine) of a hypothesis is examined. If the hypothesis cannot be rejected, then support for the theory is shown. The method by which the hypothesis is observed and measured is known as “research.” The relationship between theory and research may be either inductive or deductive in nature.

Inductive Logic

In the stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle his detective hero, Sherlock Holmes, continuously assails Dr. Watson, a man of science, about the merits of “deductive logic.” It is through deductive logic that Holmes is said to solve his cases. In actuality, the process that Holmes describes is “inductive logic.” In this process the researcher observes an event, makes empirical generalizations about the activity, and constructs a theory based on these activities. Only rarely does Holmes engage in the deduction of which he so highly speaks.

Another example of inductive logic is Sir Isaac Newton's alleged formulation of the Theory of Gravity after observing an apple fall from a tree.

Deductive Logic

Deductive logic begins with a theoretical orientation. The researcher then develops research hypotheses that are tested by observations. These observations lead to empirical generalizations that either support or challenge the theory in question. Had our hero Holmes followed up his theory construction with such observation, then he would have engaged in deduction. The scientific method is based on deductive theory construction and testing. In criminologic research, the distinctions between inductive and deductive logic are often obscured because the two processes are actually complementary. Although described in a circular model (Wallace, 1971), the elements of both inductive and deductive logic may also be viewed as part of a never-ending continuum that begins with theory, which encourages creation of hypotheses, and which in turn calls for observations. The result of observations is generalizations, and the conclusions of the generalizations assist in modification of the theory.

The Purpose of Research

The average college student truly believes he or she knows what it means to conduct research. Many have written a “research paper” either in high school or for a college course. Realistically, few have ever had the opportunity truly to write a research paper because even fewer have ever conducted scientific research.

What Is Research

Research is the conscientious study of an issue, problem, or subject. It is a useful form of inquiry designed to assist in discovering answers. It can also lead to the creation of new questions. For example, a judge wants to know how much effect her sentencing has had on individuals convicted of drug possession, particularly as it compares to another judge's sentencing patterns. She asks that research be conducted that focuses on recidivism of these individuals. The results indicate that 30% of drug offenders sentenced in her court are rearrested, compared to only 20% from the other judge's court. Between the two courts, the judge has discovered that her sentencing does not seem to be as effective. This answered the primary question of the research but it has also created new questions, such as why her methods are not working as well as the other judge's.

Research creates questions, but ultimately, regardless of the subject or topic under study, it is the goal of research to provide answers. One of the more common uses of the term “research” is a description of what a student might be asked to accomplish for a college class. Often, one hears instructors

and students refer to the choosing of a topic, using several sources, and writing a descriptive paper on the topic as research. If done thoroughly and objectively, this may actually constitute qualitative research (discussed in detail in Chapter 6). Unfortunately, these “research papers” are too often essays based more on the individual’s ideologies rather than on scientific discovery. For the purpose of this text, the emphasis is on empirical research that yields scholarly results.

There are many formal definitions for the term “research.” The following is adopted here: research is the scientific investigation into or of a specifically identified phenomenon and is applicable to recognizable and undiscovered phenomena. Therefore, in terms of criminal justice and criminology, related research can be viewed as the investigation into or of any phenomenon linked to any or all aspects of the criminal justice system.

Using this definition, criminal justice and criminologic research is not limited to any one area. Box 1-1 offers just a few of the related topics one might research.

Box 1-1

Applied Research Topics: Some Examples

Policing

- Stress
- Patrol effectiveness
- Use of force
- Job satisfaction
- Community policing
- Citizen satisfaction

Courts

- Types of sentencing
- Plea bargaining
- Race and sentencing
- Jury versus judge verdicts
- Paid versus public defender

Corrections

- Rehabilitation versus punishment
- Community corrections
- Boot camps
- Restorative justice
- Death penalty

Other

- Criminal behavior
- Victims
- Drugs
- Gangs
- Juvenile criminality

Along with the plethora of research topics, there are several methods for conducting research. These include surveys, observation, case studies, and reviewing official records. These methods are discussed in further detail, but first it is important to understand all the underlying characteristics of research. To begin with, criminal justice and criminologic research is often divided into two forms: applied and basic.

Applied Research

Perhaps the most immediately useful type of research in criminal justice is applied research, which is primarily an inquiry of a scientific nature designed and conducted with practical application as its goal. It is the collection of data and its analyses with respect to a specific issue or problem so that the applications of the results can influence change. In essence, applied research provides answers that can be used to improve, change, or help decide to eliminate the focus of study. For example, Hernandez (2009) compared several types of self-administered questionnaires among Hispanic juveniles to identify which one was the best predictor of substance abuse.

Basic Research

Basic research, sometimes referred to as “pure research,” is the conducting of scientific inquiries that may not offer or provide any direct application or relevance (Drake & Jonson-Reid, 2008; Dunn, 2009). Instead, it is concerned with the acquisition of new information for the purpose of helping develop the scholarly discipline or field of study in which the research is being conducted. This type of research is more often consistent with criminologic inquiries. The findings from basic research often have little or no applicable usage in the field of criminal justice. However, such research may become the foundation on which is based subsequent applied research and criminal justice policy. It is such research that leads to the development of the criminologic theories that guide the actions of lawmakers, police, courts, and corrections. For example, Dantzker and McCoy (2006) explored what process was being used by the largest 17 Texas municipal police agencies for psychologic preemployment screening of police officer candidates. This information was later used to help create a survey tool for a larger research study but initially was simply information gathering or pure research.

Multipurpose Research

Basic and applied research are vital in the study of crime and justice. Yet, a good portion of the research conducted by criminal justice and criminologic academicians tends to come under a third area of research best labeled as “multipurpose research.” Multipurpose research is the scientific inquiry into an issue or problem that could be both descriptive and evaluative. That is, it is between the basic and applied realms. This type of research generally begins as exploratory but is of such a nature that its results could ultimately

be applicable. For example, a police chief is interested in the level of job satisfaction among his sworn employees. A job satisfaction survey is conducted that offers a variety of findings related to officers' satisfaction. From a basic perspective, the data may simply describe how officers perceive satisfaction with differing aspects of their jobs, becoming descriptive in nature. However, these same findings could be used to evaluate the police agency by examining those areas where satisfaction is the lowest and leading to efforts to determine how to improve these areas. This is the applied nature of the research. The result is research that is multipurpose.

Whether applied, basic, or multipurpose, research can provide interesting findings about a plethora of problems, events, issues, or activities. Regardless of the strategies used, criminologic and criminal justice research is necessary for understanding crime and criminality and for developing suitable responses.

Types of Research

Before conducting research, one must understand something about research; that is, one must first study how research is correctly conducted. At some point in one's college career or during one's employment, a person may be asked to look into something or research a topic. Often, the individual has no clue where to look, how to begin, or what to look for. Then, once the information is obtained, the person may not understand how the information was found and what it actually means.

The primary reason for studying research is to be able to attain a better understanding of why it was done and how it may be used (Bickman & Rog, 2009; Hagan, 2006; Maxfield & Babbie, 2009). Ultimately, if one does not understand what research is and how it works, one cannot understand the products of research. Therefore, the answer to why one studies research is the same reason as why one conducts research: to gain knowledge. This knowledge may occur in one of four formats or types: (1) descriptive, (2) explanatory, (3) predictive, and (4) intervening knowledge (Bachman & Schutt, 2008; Bryman, 2008; Kraska & Neuman, 2008; Lavrakas, 2008).

Descriptive Research

Knowledge that is descriptive allows one to understand the essence of a topic. Research of this nature helps one gain a better grasp about an issue or problem of which one knows little. For example, women have played some role in criminality in this country for years. Yet, very little is known about women and criminality, especially with respect to certain types of crime (e.g., organized crime). To understand better what role women have played, a descriptive study might be conducted. Descriptive knowledge is a very common result of criminal justice and criminologic research. Although the results might be very informative, what can be done with this knowledge is often limited.

Explanatory Research

Explanatory research tries to tell why something occurs, the causes behind the event. This research can be very important when trying to understand why certain types of individuals become serial murderers, or what factors contribute to criminality. Knowing the causes behind something can assist in finding ways to counteract the behavior or the problem. For example, research focusing on gang membership may help to explain why some individuals and not others join gangs. This information could assist in deterring potential future gang members. Ultimately, this type of research may provide answers to questions of how and why.

Predictive Research

Knowledge that is predictive in nature helps to establish future actions. This type of research can be useful to all criminal justice practitioners. For example, if research indicates that a large percentage of juveniles placed in boot-camp environments are less likely to become adult offenders, these results could be used in the future sentencing of juvenile offenders. Conversely, if boot camps are shown to have little or no effect, other alternatives may then be explored. Predictive knowledge gives some foresight into what may happen if something is tried or implemented. Because one of the concerns of criminal justice is to lower criminality, predictive knowledge could be quite useful in attaining this end.

Intervening Research

Intervening knowledge allows one to intercede before a problem or issue gets too difficult to address. This type of research can be quite significant when a problem arises that currently available means are not properly addressing. Research on the effectiveness of certain community policing programs is a good example of intervening research. It can demonstrate whether a specific type of action taken before a given point provides the desired results.

Whether the research is descriptive, explanatory, predictive, or intervening, it is important to understand what research is and how it is valuable. If one fails to study research in and of itself, then all research is of little value. This becomes especially true for the criminal justice and criminologic academic or practitioner who wants to make use of previously conducted research or to conduct his or her own research. It is important to have a grasp of what research is and why it is conducted, before one can actually conduct research.

Why Research Is Necessary

There are a number of specific reasons for conducting criminal justice or criminologic research. Ultimately, the reason is because it is of interest to the researcher. Three primary reasons include (1) curiosity, (2) addressing social problems, and (3) the development and testing of theories.

Curiosity

Being curious is wanting to know about an existing problem, issue, policy, or outcome. For example, in the early 1990s Dantzker and Ali-Jackson were interested in what effect a course might have on students' perceptions of policing. A primary reason for this research was the curiosity of one of the researchers who taught police courses and wanted to see whether there were any differences between perceptions at the beginning and at the end of the course.

Social Problems

The most salient social problem related to criminal justice is crime. Who commits it? Why do they act as they do? How do they do it? These are questions of interest for many criminal justice and criminologic practitioners and academics. Concern over the effects of crime on society only adds further reason to conduct related research. This research can help identify who is more likely to commit certain crimes and why, how to deal better with the offenders and the victims, and what specific parts of the system can do to help limit or even alleviate crime. As a major social problem, crime provides many reasons for research and avenues for exploration.

Theory Testing

Linked more closely with pure criminologic research, theories provide good cause to conduct research. The relationship between theory and research was discussed previously in this chapter. Theory construction is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Factors That Influence Research Decisions

Regardless of why the research is conducted, one must be cognizant of factors that can influence why and how it is conducted (Bachman & Schutt, 2008; Lavrakas, 2008). These factors should be identified and carefully considered before starting the research. There are three main influential factors: (1) social and political, (2) practicality, and (3) ethical considerations (Bickman & Rog, 2009; Bryman, 2008; Hagan, 2006; Kraska & Neuman, 2008; Maxfield & Babbie, 2009).

The social and political influences are often specific to the given research. Criminology and criminal justice as social sciences are greatly influenced by social and political events taking place in society. For example, race and ethnicity, economics, and gender might be influential on research about prison environments. Research on whether a particular law is working might have political ramifications. The inability of the criminal justice system to address problems identified by research may not be caused by the lack of system resources but rather by a lack of social desire or political will.

When it comes to conducting research, practicality can play an extremely important role. Economics and logistics are two elements of practicality. How much will the research cost? Can it be conducted in an efficient and effective manner? Would the benefits that are anticipated justify the social, political, and economic costs? Would limited resources be taken from other areas? These are just some of the questions of practicality that could influence the conducting of research and the subsequent uses of that research.

Because ethics plays an important role in conducting research, a more in-depth discussion is offered in Chapter 2. It is briefly noted here that there are three ethical considerations of importance: (1) invasion of privacy, (2) deception, and (3) potential harm. Within a free society citizens jealously protect their rights to privacy. These rights are not just expected by citizens but are protected by law. Deception can have adverse effects not only on the research findings but also on the individuals who were deceived by the researcher. Harm to others, especially to those who did not willingly accept such risks, must be avoided. Each of these considerations is explored later in greater detail.

Whatever the reason, researchers must be aware of the influences that have led to the research and those that might affect the research outcomes. Each could be detrimental to the outcome of the research.

How Research Is Done

Whether the research is applied or basic, qualitative or quantitative (to be discussed in later chapters), certain basic steps are applicable. There are five primary steps in conducting research: (1) identifying the research problem, (2) research design, (3) data collection, (4) data analyses, and (5) reporting of results. Each of these is given greater attention later in the text, but a brief introduction here is appropriate.

Identifying the Problem

Before starting a research project, one of the most important steps is recognizing and defining what is going to be studied. Identifying or determining the problem, issue, or policy to be studied sets the groundwork for the rest of the research. For example, embarking on the study of crime can be too great an undertaking without focusing on a specific aspect of crime, such as types, causes, or punishments. Therefore, it is important first to specify the target of the research. Doing this makes it easier to complete the remaining stages.

Research Design

The research design is the blueprint, which outlines how the research is to be conducted. Although the design depends on the nature of the research, there

are several common designs used in criminal justice and criminology. Various designs are presented in this section, and discussed in detail in later chapters.

Survey Research

One of the most often used methods of research is surveys. This approach obtains data directly from the targeted sources and is often conducted through self-administered or interview questionnaires. This type of research generally allows for use of a large sample.

Field Research

Field research is when researchers gather data through firsthand observations of their targets. For example, if a researcher wanted to learn more about gang membership and activities he or she might try “running” with a gang as a participant-observer. This is one of the more time-consuming and limiting designs.

Experimental Research

Experimental research is also observational research. Unlike field research, however, observational studies involve the administration of research stimuli to participants in a controlled environment. Because of ethical and economic concerns, this kind of experimental research is conducted less frequently in criminal justice than are other research strategies.

Life Histories or Case Studies

One of the simplest methods of research in criminology and criminal justice is the use of life histories or case studies. Often these studies require the review and analysis of documents. This type of research might focus on violent behavior where the researcher investigates the lives of serial murderers to try and comprehend why the persons acted in a particular manner.

Record Studies

Another research design is where the researcher evaluates and analyzes official records for relevant data. Previously collected data can be a time saver, but the timeliness of the data may come into question. For example, to determine patterns and influences of robbery, the research design might use data from Uniform Crime Reports.

Content Analysis

In this research design documents, publications, or presentations are reviewed and analyzed. A researcher might review old documents to determine how crime events were publicized in a prior century or may monitor current television broadcasts to assess how the entertainment media influences public perceptions of crime. As another example, to identify the qualifications sought for police chiefs, a researcher could review published advertisements for the position of police chief.

These designs offer a variety of options. There are other possible design methods, which are discussed later in the text. Ultimately, the design used depends on the nature of the study.

Data Collection

Regardless of the research design, data collection is a key component. A variety of methods (discussed in more detail later in the text) exist. They include surveys, interviews, observations, and previously existing data.

Data Analysis

How to analyze and interpret the data is more appropriately discussed in another course, perhaps one focusing on statistics. However, it is an important part of the design and cannot be ignored. The most common means for data analysis today is through the use of a computer and specifically oriented software.

Reporting

The last phase of any research project is the reporting of the findings. This can be done through various means: reports, journals, books, or computer presentation. How the findings are reported depends on the target audience. Regardless of the audience or the medium used, the findings must be coherent and understandable or they are of no use to anyone.

There is one last area worthy of a brief discussion. Information has been offered on why and how to conduct research, but when is it inappropriate to conduct research? Often it seems that research is conducted with little concern as to the appropriateness of the research. Failing to consider this might render the findings useless. Therefore, it has been suggested that the prospective researcher be able to answer the following questions with a negative response (Eck & La Vigne, 1994):

1. Does the research problem involve question(s) of value rather than fact?
2. Is the solution to the research question already predetermined, effectively annulling the findings?
3. Is it impossible to conduct the research effectively and efficiently?
4. Are the research issues vague and ill defined?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, the research in question should be avoided.

Summary

Conducting criminologic research goes beyond looking up material on a subject and writing a descriptive paper. Before conducting research, one must

understand what it is, why it is, and how it might be conducted. For the purposes of this text criminal justice and criminologic research are defined as the investigation into or of any phenomenon linked to any or all aspects of the criminal justice system. The type of research conducted can be applied, basic, or multipurpose. A primary reason for conducting research is to gain knowledge, which can be descriptive, explanatory, predictive, or intervening in nature. Studying research is required to understand better the results offered.

All research tends to follow five basic steps: (1) recognizing and defining a problem, issue, or policy for study; (2) designing the research; (3) collecting data through survey, interviews, observation, or examining previously collected data; (4) analyzing the data; and (5) reporting the findings. Finally, it is important to determine whether it is prudent to conduct the research in question.

Research plays a very important role in criminal justice and criminology. It brings questions and answers, debates, and issues. Knowing what it is, why it is done, and how it can be accomplished is necessary if one is to study crime and criminal behavior.

METHODOLOGICAL QUERIES

For the duration of the text, the methodological queries will be linked to the following:

You are one of several individuals being considered to conduct a study to measure job satisfaction among correctional officers in your county's jail facility. Prior to awarding the research contract, each candidate has to demonstrate he or she is the right person for the job. The process requires you to correctly answer all the questions at the end of each chapter.

- 1 The sheriff tells you that he believes his employees are generally satisfied with the department simply based on his casual observations. You know that casual observations can be flawed for a number of reasons. How would you explain this to him?
- 2 Having explained to the sheriff how casual observation can be error prone, you suggest that using the scientific method can account for errors in casual observation. Explain how.
- 3 The sheriff insists that it would be easy to deduce the level of job satisfaction of his employees. What are the differences between inductive and deductive logic?
- 4 If given the opportunity to conduct the proposed research, what type of research would you be conducting: basic, applied, or multipurpose research?
- 5 What type of research design might you use? Why?
- 6 Describe the steps you would take to complete the research.

