These first three chapters answer some basic questions about knowledge, its construction, and its use within crime and justice studies. The discussion revolves around three central questions: What do we study and why? How do we know what we know? What are the best ways to generate valid, reliable, and legitimate knowledge?

Aside from Chapter 4 on ethics, we believe that these first three chapters are the most important in the book. The rest focus on how we research—techniques of the research process. These later chapters are somewhat technical and centered on how to conduct and assess research. Although this information is vital, we must first construct the big picture or road map—one that includes information and ideas about our discipline (what we study and who conducts research), theory (what theory is and why it is essential to research), and philosophy (the underlying assumptions of crime and justice knowledge and the various approaches to its production). The aim is to help you more competently, and with a greater level of critical awareness, navigate your way through either producing or consuming crime and justice research. In short, a solid theoretical and philosophical foundation is crucial for developing the necessary skills to critically assess research studies and claims to legitimate knowledge.

These first three chapters, then, outline the larger context of crime and criminal justice research. Our goal is to help educate you about research methods in crime and justice studies, as well as how to research and how to apply it properly. Chapter 1 discusses what we research and identifies the researchers. It also provides an overview in abbreviated form of how research is conducted. It concludes with the various reasons we conduct research as well as an outline of how the study of research methods is tangibly beneficial to you, the student. Chapter 2 examines the nature of crime and justice research. It details those sources of everyday knowledge that most of us rely on and some of their shortcomings, and then describes the history, standards, and process of social science research. It includes important sections on the dimension of “time” and the connection between politics and research. Finally, Chapter 3 first presents three philosophical approaches available to us for conducting crime and justice research:

1. positivist social science;
2. interpretive social science; and
3. critical social science.

The differences and similarities of each are presented. The second part of Chapter 3 provides a detailed examination of theory, its role in conducting quality research, and its various types.

We hope this foundational roadmap serves you well for the remainder of the book.
CHAPTER 1
Criminal Justice and Criminology Research: Mapping the Terrain

Knowledge, Research, and Power
What Do We Research?
Who Are the Researchers?
Professors in Practice
Governmental Research
Highlight 1.1 Researching Rape on Campus: The National Institute of Justice (NIJ)
Practitioner-Based Research
Journalists as Researchers
Highlight 1.2 Missing Children Hysteria
Student Research
How Do We Conduct Research?
Quantitative and Qualitative Research
Collecting Quantitative Data
■ Experimental Research
■ Survey and Interview Research
■ Nonreactive Research
  □ Existing Documents/Statistics Research
  □ Content Analysis
Collecting Qualitative Data
■ Ethnographic Field Research
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Why Do We Conduct Research?
Basic Research
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Highlight 1.3 Making a Difference through Research and Scholarship
Beyond the Basic/Applied Distinction
The Four Purposes of Research
Exploration
Highlight 1.4 A Sample of Potential Exploratory Research Topics
Description
Explanation
Evaluation
Highlight 1.5 GAO Critiques NIJ Evaluation Research
The Relevance of Research
Conclusion
Key Terms
Review Questions
Practicing Research
Notes for Additional Study
Welcome to the fascinating world of crime and justice research. This first chapter is designed to orient you to research in our particular field of study, crime and justice studies. Let’s start by looking at how the activity of research fits into the big picture.

The quest for knowledge is a defining feature of human history. Seeking the truth, being liberated from ignorance, and trying to answer that ever-elusive question, what is really the case? underpins nearly every aspect of humankind’s evolution. What we ultimately agree on as being accurate and useful knowledge forms the basis for what we define and view as reality. However, agreeing on the proper methods to search for and validate what is knowledge—such as traditional myths, religious texts, or scientific research methods—has been a source of struggle and conflict for centuries.

The struggle is not over. Today’s headlines demonstrate that large differences still remain over how best to determine what we know. The media dubs one dimension of this conflict the “science wars.” Several contemporary issues are illustrative. Are the scientific studies documenting global warming and its causes valid, or are they skewed because of climatologists’ ideological leanings? Should the scientifically tested “theory of evolution” be placed on the same educational plane as the biblically based notion of “intelligent design”? Are recent dramatic drops in reported violent crime in the United States due mainly to social, economic, and demographic factors as explained in numerous academic studies, or are they caused simply by getting tough with law violators, regardless of what the “experts” say?

These questions point to an interesting paradox: as research-based knowledge in our society grows exponentially in both size and influence, so has the level of skepticism about its legitimacy. As in the past, what we know and how we determine what we know are under serious dispute.

Besides long-standing differences in worldviews (religion vs. science), a central factor driving this dispute can be found in the close relationship between knowledge and power. Put simply, knowledge generates power, and conversely, power generates knowledge (see Figure 1.1). Let’s look at what this knowledge/power dynamic entails.

The research methods detailed in this book are specifically designed to generate knowledge. Research-based knowledge, if perceived as legitimate and accurate, holds tremendous capacity to influence others. For example, medical doctors assume that the prescription drugs they dispense are safe only because of the research findings generated by pharmaceutical companies (an assumption currently under serious dispute). We assume that the knowledge associated with a drug we place in our mouth is legitimate and we won’t be harmed as a result; that’s power!

Conversely, with regard to power generating knowledge, the government helps to pay for the research and development of new drugs by these companies. The U.S. government’s and the drug company’s power, therefore, determine what illnesses are targeted, and which
drugs are developed and researched. Hence, these two entities’ interests—making the largest profit possible, keeping political interest groups happy, and treating illness—guide what is researched and how that research is conducted (power generating knowledge).

In today’s information-based society, scientific research methods produce one of our most authoritative sources of knowledge. It consequently wields considerable power, and often lies at the center of today’s most pressing issues and conflicts (i.e., knowledge generates power). It is at the same time subject to manipulation by people or institutions that are attempting to wield power to further their own interests (i.e., power generates knowledge).

Nowhere is this knowledge/power dynamic more relevant than in the study of crime and criminal justice. The trends and issues we research are highly contested and loaded with vested interests: the causes and pains of violence against children, the state execution of convicted murderers, the recent history of terrorism and how to control it, the use and distribution of illegal drugs, and the rapid growth in the number of criminal laws. People’s views on these types of topics vary dramatically. Where some see oppression, others see justice; where some see a violation of human rights, others see the upholding of public order; where some see myth and hysteria, others see fact and reality.

Our field of study possesses tremendous potential to shed much needed empirical light on these types of topics and issues. The knowledge/power dynamic, however, instructs us on the importance of generating credible knowledge only through the most rigorous social scientific methods, independent, the extent possible, of dominant interests. Put in a different way, research holds tremendous power to influence, yet the researcher must be diligent to resist being unduly influenced by those in power.

The Old French word recerchier means “an intense search for knowledge.” We’ll define crime and justice research as a collection of social science methods applied systematically to generate knowledge about crime and justice phenomena.

This book details numerous methods to generate knowledge, including surveys, interviews, experiments, ethnographic field research, existing data, and historical analyses. Consider that at this exact moment tens of thousands of people in our field—practitioners, academics, students, and other interested parties—are using these methods to collect evidence and data about a range of topics and problems. They are, for example,

■ developing and testing theories about the why of crime,
■ questioning taken for granted assumptions about how to control crime,
■ evaluating traditional and cutting-edge criminal justice practices,
■ documenting the prevalence of criminal violence in U.S. society, and
■ exploring the consequences of crime for its victims.

These research pursuits are clearly needed, engaging, and intense. In the context of the big picture, crime and justice research really does matter.

WHAT DO WE RESEARCH?

You should now have some sense of how crime and criminal justice research methods fit into today’s ever-changing society. Let’s examine next what exactly we research—referred to as our objects of study. The range of our objects of study in criminology/criminal justice is vast. In fact, because our field of study is a relatively new one and growing rapidly, the boundaries around what we study are still being drawn.

Notice that we even had to use two labels for our field—criminology and criminal justice. Criminology is usually seen as the study of crime, including how it is defined,
and its causes, control, and nature. *Criminal justice* examines crime control policies and the criminal justice system and its components. Many perceive of criminology as theoretically oriented and criminal justice as practically oriented. We have two reasons for preferring to use the unifying label *crime and justice studies* (sometimes we’ll use crime and criminal justice studies). First, it’s far less cumbersome. Second, the split between criminology and criminal justice seems to be based more on old academic turf wars than actual substantive differences. When we consider the actual research, teaching, and intellectual interests of professors working in both fields, the commonalities and overlap far outweigh the differences. Criminology researchers increasingly study practical crime control matters, and there is an entire body of theoretical scholarship on crime control/criminal justice topics (Kraska 2006) (discussed further in Chapter 3).

This difficulty in labeling our field is a testament to our diversity. As noted, our area of study is both theoretically and practically oriented. We research technical/practical questions (e.g., how to best supervise police officer patrol time) as well as sophisticated theoretical issues (e.g., explaining the massive increase in incarceration over the last thirty years). Crime and justice studies is also multidisciplinary, meaning it is influenced by numerous academic fields such as sociology, anthropology, biology, economics, geography, political science, history, psychology, psychiatry, philosophy, public administration, international and comparative studies, and legal jurisprudence, among others. Multiple academic lenses result in a wide diversity of perspectives, numerous areas of study, and a highly eclectic selection of research methods (revisited in Chapter 3). In short, our diversity allows for a good deal of freedom in what we study and options for how to research.

Figure 1.2 shows the various objects of research at a recent American Society of Criminology (ASC) meeting. The ASC is one of two professional organizations for academics in our field; the other is the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS), which also holds a similar annual meeting (both the ACJS and the ASC have Web sites worth looking at). If you look through the topics in Figure 1.2, we think you’ll find an impressive diversity of interesting and relevant subjects.

All the objects of study in this figure, and in our discipline in general, fall under what we will refer to simply as *crime and justice phenomena*. This includes all topics, activities, issues, questions, and trends that revolve around crime, crime control, and the criminal justice system. Assuming you are a criminology or criminal justice major, it is likely that research has been conducted on nearly every topic brought up in your other courses. Some of these topics are very controversial—crimes committed by the U.S. government—and some are extremely technical—whether less-than-lethal weaponry (pepper spray, for example) reduces injuries for police and corrections officers. International research has also become commonplace, and research on terrorism and our reaction to terrorism are increasingly popular subjects.

Table 1.1 shows data we collected specifically for this book (with the help of a very capable research assistant, Robert Seaver). We examined the content of every article in four of our best-known and respected academic journals over a ten-year period (a total of 1,366 cases). We hoped to obtain a clearer picture, through quantitative documentation, of various dimensions of research in our field. One of the things we examined (what researchers refer to as variables) was the different objects of study found in these journals and their prevalence. Studies usually include more than one object of study—we coded only the primary focus of the research.

As you can see, crime was, not surprisingly, the most researched topic (310 articles, or 23 percent of the total), followed by studies on the correctional subsystem (192 articles, or 14 percent of the total), then the juvenile justice system, and finally the police (13 and 12 percent, respectively). Race and gender issues were featured in 178 articles (13 percent), and international/comparative topics in 73 articles.
FIGURE 1.2 A Sample of Research Topics at the 2006 American Society of Criminology Meeting

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WHO ARE THE RESEARCHERS?

It would be misleading to give the impression, however, that crime and criminal justice research is found only in journals monopolized by academic researchers. Research and statistics have become an integral part of professional and bureaucratic life as well. Nonacademic practitioners—in policing, courts, prisons, probation, juvenile justice, the legal community, journalists, government researchers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and activist/interest group organizations—all conduct, with increasing regularity, a wide range of different kinds of research.

Professors in Practice

Many crime and justice academics also work as paid consultants and as pro bono researchers for the government, NGOs, and even special-interest groups. A common
arrangement is paid-for consulting work, where an academic researcher is hired by an agency or organization to research a particular topic. A county jail, for example, needs to know the likely size of its inmate population in ten years, or a community group opposed to legalized gambling wants to know if there is a relationship between casinos and crime. These studies are occasionally published in academic journals, but they are generally used for bureaucratic or political reasons. The various research arrangements are too numerous to review, but Figure 1.3 provides a cursory look.

One noteworthy variety is in the area of expert witness research and testimony. Numerous academics in our field contract out their research expertise to law firms or the government for civil and criminal legal cases. Professor Victor Kappeler has worked many civil litigation cases in which the police allegedly engaged in some form of misconduct. Most cases involve the wrongful use of deadly force, but some have included racial profiling, and illegal strip and body cavity searches of female motorists. Dr. Kappeler is often asked to uncover or disprove a pattern of wrongdoing and negligence

**Expert witness research**
Research conducted for the purpose of presenting it to the courts as a part of some legal proceeding.
by the police department (a legal requirement under civil litigation cases against the police). This requires him to collect, code, and analyze sensitive police records and data, and report his research findings under oath.

Dr. James W. Marquart, an expert in the area of corrections, has presented his academic research findings in numerous death penalty cases. His research examined whether inmates released from death row, a result of the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Furman v. Georgia*, were at risk of committing additional violent crimes. He did not find evidence to support the hypothesis of future danger. His data and analysis raised questions about the reliability of psychiatrists' expert-witness predictions that a typical murderer poses a future danger to society—in some states a legal requirement for imposing the death penalty.3

**TABLE 1.1 Prevalence of Crime and Justice Objects of Study (1995–2004)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object of Study</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>310</td>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrections</td>
<td>192</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile justice</td>
<td>176</td>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>166</td>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Discipline, Crime and Justice Studies</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal law</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courts</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1,366</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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*The four journals included Criminology, Justice Quarterly, Journal of Criminal Justice, and Crime and Delinquency.

**FIGURE 1.3 Who Carries Out Crime and Justice Research?**

**Academic Researchers at Colleges and Universities**
- Academics researching for scholarly publications
- Academics researching for private or public C&J organizations
- Academics researching as part of expert witness testimony work
- Academics researching for activist organization (e.g., Amnesty International)
- Academics researching for educational institutions (e.g., research on teaching efficacy)
- Academics researching for foreign countries

**Practitioner-Based Research and at Federal, State, and Local Level**
- Practitioners embarking on their own research for agency purposes
- Practitioners conducting research in concert with academic researchers

**Professional Researchers Working Outside Academe**
- Researchers working in research division of large organization (e.g., NIJ; British Home Office; state-level research department; research department within police agency; Government Accounting Office)
- Researchers working in interest group (e.g., Cato Institute, American Bar Association; Human Rights Watch)

**Print/Media Journalists**

**Students**
- Students conducting research as part of class project
- Students conducting research in concert with academic researcher
Governmental Research

Governments also conduct a great deal of crime and justice research at the federal, state, local, and even international levels. In fact, generating scientifically based knowledge has been a centerpiece of attempts at criminal justice reform worldwide. The British Home Office, for instance, is the department responsible for criminal justice and public safety in Great Britain. Its researchers undertake a multitude of research endeavors to help them better understand how best to address crime. Recent Home Office projects have focused on reducing domestic violence, what treatment programs work in prisons, and the effectiveness of community policing (see www.homeoffice.gov.uk). The United Nations has its own research division, which commissions numerous studies on human and illegal arms trafficking, childhood slavery, and violations of international law (see www.unicri.it). The American Society of Criminology is increasingly active in international research arrangements with the United Nations.

In the United States, the Department of Justice oversees the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), two large departments dedicated to crime and justice research. The BJS administers the *National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)*, the primary source of information on criminal victimization in the United States. Every year, they collect data from a nationally representative sample of 42,000 households on the frequency and consequences of criminal victimization. The NIJ is a research agency responsible for awarding and overseeing research grants targeted at crime control and justice issues. The NIJ is the most commonly used source of research funding for crime and justice academics. Highlight 1.1 illustrates an example of the type of research it sponsors. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, also a branch of the Department of Justice, collects and analyzes data on reported crimes and arrests (found in the *Uniform Crime Reports*), as well as on hate crimes and numbers of police officers killed and assaulted while on duty.

Most individual states have their own criminal justice research office, and local criminal justice agencies, such as police departments or probation departments, engage

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**NCVS**
The acronym for the National Crime Victimization Survey, which is the primary source of information on criminal victimization in the United States.

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**HIGHLIGHT 1.1 RESEARCHING RAPE ON CAMPUS: THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE (NIJ)**

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is a branch of the U.S. Department of Justice. The U.S. Department of Justice is a part of the executive branch of the U.S. government; the president of the United States appoints its agencies’ leaders. The mission of the NIJ is to “advance scientific research, development, and evaluation to enhance the administration of justice and public safety.” A recent study funded by the NIJ is typical of the kind of research it sponsors. The NIJ sends out annually “requests for proposals” (RFPs)—usually detailing those topics they are interested in funding. In this case, the NIJ was asked by Congress to research nine specific issues concerning how universities respond to campus sexual assault. Professors Heather Karjane, Bonnie Fisher, and Francis Cullen (2002) were awarded the grant project. Their objective was exploratory and descriptive in nature: they wanted to collect baseline data on existing practices, policies, and the extent of the problem. They summarized their findings as follows:

- Only a third of colleges report sexual assault properly.
- Anonymous reporting of sexual assault is an option at only half of U.S. schools.
- Fewer than half the schools inform students on how to file criminal charges.
- Many schools are doing exemplary work in this area; this study identifies a list of “best-practices” appropriate for other universities to emulate.
in various degrees of research. These can range from large-scale projects involving millions of dollars to a single officer in a police or probation agency who is responsible for constructing an annual report (usually a college graduate who had paid close attention in her research methods course).

**Practitioner-Based Research**

The fact is that in the real world of today’s criminal justice apparatus, research is ubiquitous and unavoidable. Criminal justice practitioners generate on a daily basis, sometimes with the assistance of academics, massive amounts of data and analysis in areas such as family violence, violent youth crime, arrests, illegal drug use among arrestees, gangs, prison disciplinary infractions, and probation revocations. Katz (2003) describes one program, for instance, in which 56 percent of all U.S. police departments collect street-level data on gangs in their jurisdictions. These data are sent to the BJS, where academic researchers use them for their own studies. The BJS conducts a similar program for generating national-level data on hate crimes.

Crime and justice researchers often rely heavily on these types of practitioner-generated data (UCR data, for example). These data are also being used within the system for identifying crime patterns (see crime-mapping and analysis highlight in Chapter 10), developing risk models to help in sentencing offenders, and constructing elaborate classification systems for incarcerated offenders.

**Journalists as Researchers**

Journalists also conduct crime and justice research. Your authors have worked extensively with investigative print journalists from credible publications and have found them without exception to be adept, conscientious, and resourceful researchers. They dig deep to understand what they are studying using multiple field research techniques. They also collect and analyze quantitative data, oftentimes obtaining sensitive documents from government officials using the freedom of information act (see Figure 1.4). It was actually the

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**HIGHLIGHT 1.2**

**MISSING CHILDREN HYSTERIA**

The missing children myth discussed in this chapter is illustrative of the vital yet difficult position in which crime and justice researchers can find themselves. John Walsh is the host of the long-running and popular America’s Most Wanted. Walsh’s son was the victim of stranger-abduction and was subsequently murdered. Imagine how difficult it is to disprove and critique, using the cold facts found in statistics, Walsh’s assertion that 1.5 million children are abducted per year and that “this country is littered with mutilated, decapitated, raped and strangled children” (Glassner 1999: 63). Politicians since Ronald Reagan have capitalized on this fear and much of the media uncritically reports hearsay as facts. Researchers are placed in the unenviable position of trying to explain the “scientific facts” of the matter, juxtaposed against the reality that there are indeed real victims with deep emotional pain. Of course, in the end it does no one any good to grossly exaggerate the problem. As many criminologists note, public policy based on raw emotion, unjustified fear, and distorted facts will yield few benefits and many negative, albeit unintended, consequences.
FIGURE 1.4 Sample Freedom of Information Act Letter

This letter is typical of the type of request a researcher or journalist might make of a governmental agency. There are numerous federal and state laws that mandate governmental agencies to make public the information they collect—unless there is a compelling reason not to.

Agency Head [or Freedom of Information Act Officer]
Name of Agency
Address of Agency City, State, Zip Code

Re: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear ______________:

This is a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

I request that a copy of the following documents [or documents containing the following information] be provided to me: [identify the documents or information as specifically as possible].

In order to help to determine my status to assess fees, you should know that I am [insert a suitable description of the requester and the purpose of the request].

[Sample requester descriptions: a representative of the news media affiliated with the _________ newspaper (magazine, television station, etc.), and this request is made as part of news gathering and not for a commercial use. Or, this request is affiliated with an educational or noncommercial scientific institution, and is being made for a scholarly or scientific purpose and not for a commercial use].

[Optional] I am willing to pay fees for this request up to a maximum of $_____. If you estimate that the fees will exceed this limit, please inform me first.

[Optional] I request a waiver of all fees for this request. Disclosure of the requested information to me is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in my commercial interest. [Include a specific explanation.]

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

careful research conducted by Los Angeles Times journalists that debunked the most often cited crime myth in our field—the missing children phenomenon (see Highlight 1.2).

President Ronald Reagan called it the nation’s most dire domestic problem. If the statistics had been true, he would have been right: the mainstream media, and many politicians, were claiming that 1.5 million children were abducted each year and that 50,000 of those children were never found. Many Americans became highly fearful that their children would be abducted by strangers. Two skeptical Los Angeles Times journalists collected data directly from the federal government by filing a Freedom of Information Act Request and discovered that a more realistic number of children abducted by strangers was closer to one hundred. Subsequent research has found no indication that the problem has worsened over the last forty years. Included in the 1.5 million were all teenage runaways (nearly three quarters of which were found in less than twenty-four hours) and children involved in divorced or divorcing parental disputes.

The distortion of this phenomenon is still occurring. On a recent Today Show program, the anchor reported with alarm that there are 58,000 stranger-kidnappings per year—whereas the Justice Department’s figures show just 115. Later in this chapter, we highlight the rich sources of ideas for exploratory research projects found in journalistic accounts of recent events.

Student Research

Finally, let’s not forget students. Advances in information technology enable nearly any student to engage in meaningful, quality crime and justice research. We have
found students to be very capable and creative researchers (see Figure 1.5). More are using written surveys, in-depth interviews, field observations, and even the analysis of preexisting governmental data to supplement their semester papers. Our research methods students have conducted fascinating studies on snake handling in rural churches, the growth of the criminal justice system, prescription drug dealing, the why of steroid use and trafficking, police domestic violence policies, military marijuana eradication exercises, Internet sexual predators, the history of drug panics, and the expansion of police surveillance in public areas. We use numerous student research projects as examples of quality research throughout this text.

**TABLE 1.2** Prevalence of Research Methods Used in Crime and Justice Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Method</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary data set</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary data research</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content analysis</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant observer</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,483</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.5 Summary of Crime and Justice Researchers Discussed**

- College and university professors in academic journals
- College and university professors in practice
- Governmental research at federal, state, local levels
- Practitioner-based research
- Journalists as researchers
- Students as researchers

This next section briefly overviews the main data collection techniques covered in this book. In later chapters, you will read about these techniques in detail and learn how to use them; for now, we are providing you with a sense of where we’re headed. The techniques are grouped into quantitative techniques—collecting data in the form of numbers—and qualitative techniques—collecting data in the form of words or pictures. Some techniques are more effective when addressing specific kinds of research questions or topics. It takes practice, creativity, and skill to match an object of study to an appropriate data collection technique. Table 1.2 ranks a few of these various methods in crime and justice studies from most commonly used to least commonly used.

**Quantitative and Qualitative Research**

All the research methods discussed in this book are split into two categories, **quantitative and qualitative**. We will explore in depth the differences between these two; for now, think of **quantitative research as using numerically based data, and qualitative research as using text, language, and visually based data.**
qualitative research as using text, language, and visually based data. Traditionally, there has been some ill will between the followers of the two. Some have found it difficult to understand or appreciate the worth of the other approach. Thus, Levine (1993: xii) wrote, “quantitative social science,” which he called “real social science,” faced opposition but it “won the battle.” Denzin and Lincoln (2003a) argued that qualitative research has expanded greatly and is “rapidly displacing” outdated quantitative research.

As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the debate has deep philosophical roots and is far from frivolous. Fortunately, though, over the past decade, the combative stance between those advocating one approach over the other has begun to give way to a new methodological tolerance. Instead of thinking in terms of one versus the other (mutual exclusivity), most methodologists now view both qualitative and quantitative approaches as having unique strengths, weaknesses, and compatibilities (see Table 1.2). Chapter 13 will discuss how these two approaches can complement one another by mixing them together in a single study or series of studies (called mixed methods research). Summary Table 1.1 reviews some of the key differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches.

**Collecting Quantitative Data.**

Experimental research. Whereas experiments were used in only 3.5 percent of articles, all academics agree that they are critical to the scientific process and are usually seen as the apex of quantitative scientific robustness. Experimental research uses the logic and principles you learned in any good high school science course—what we’ll refer to in Chapters 2 and 3 as the “natural science” model (Chapter 9 details experimental research). Experiments can be conducted in laboratories or in real-life settings. They usually, but not always, involve a relatively small number of people and address a well-focused question. They are most effective for explaining phenomena or evaluating whether a program works.

In most experiments, the researcher divides the people being studied into two or more groups. He or she then treats both groups identically, except that one group but not the other is given a condition he or she is interested in: the “treatment.” The researcher measures the reactions of both groups precisely. By controlling the setting for both groups and giving only one group the treatment, the researcher can conclude that any differences in the reactions of the groups over a set period of time are due to the treatment alone.
One of the earliest and most well-known experiments in crime and justice research was the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study (Powers and Witmer 1951). The researchers selected boys younger than age ten and assigned them at random to a control group and a treatment group. The treatment group received numerous advantages, including school tutoring, medical and psychiatric attention, summer camp, and significant one-on-one contact with youth counselors. The control group received whatever assistance would normally be provided to any youth for example, a public education. The program was deemed an initial success because from all indications the boys in the treatment group that had previous difficulties did well compared to the control group.

However, Joan McCord’s well-known follow-up research, where she contacted and reexamined the participants over a longer time period, found that members of the treatment group “were more likely to have been convicted for crimes indexed by the FBI as serious street crimes; they had died an average of five years younger; and they were more likely to have received a medical diagnosis as alcoholic, schizophrenic, or manic-depressive” (McCord 2001: 188). She speculated that this counterintuitive finding might have been the result of juvenile delinquents attending summer camp together and reinforcing and encouraging one another’s deviant values. (Can you think of any other reasons? Perhaps, for example, something that might have happened at that summer camp?)

Experimental research is the exception in crime and justice research rather than the rule. It is difficult to conduct, and expensive to administer. In those instances where researchers have overcome these barriers, it has generally yielded important, unexpected findings, and has generated a good deal of controversy. The most comprehensive body of experimental research studied the deterrent effect of mandatory arrest for domestic violence offenders, commissioned by the National Institute of Justice. This series of experiments was unique: Sherman’s initial study, which demonstrated that arrest did reduce future reporting of abuse by victims, was replicated numerous times in order to retest Sherman’s impressive and controversial findings (Piquero et al. 2005). Replicating a research study is crucial to the scientific process because it determines if a study’s results will hold true for different researchers in different locations or settings. We will examine the mandatory arrest series of studies further in Chapter 8, which is dedicated to experiments.

**Survey and Interview Research.** In contrast to experiments, survey research is used often in our field (20 percent of journal articles rely centrally on survey research). Researchers both in and out of academia use questionnaires or interviews to learn people’s beliefs or opinions in numerous research situations (e.g., experiments, field research). Survey and interview research uses a written questionnaire or formal interview to gather quantitative data on the backgrounds, behaviors, beliefs, or attitudes of a large number of people or agencies (see Chapter 10 on survey research). Usually, they ask a large number of people or organizations dozens of questions in a short time frame. The researcher does not manipulate a situation or condition to see how people react, as in an experiment; he or she carefully records answers from many people who have been asked the same questions. Often researchers select the people or agencies for a survey using a random sampling technique so they can legitimately generalize information from a few people (e.g., one thousand) to many more (e.g., several million) (random sampling is discussed in Chapter 8).

In a provocative but important piece, “Ain’t No Faggot Gonna Rob Me: Anti-Gay Attitudes of Criminal Justice Undergraduate Majors,” Cannon (2004) used survey research to examine the attitudes of undergraduate criminal justice majors toward gays and lesbians. He surveyed a random sample of 1,055 criminal justice and non-criminal justice majors at four universities. He measured attitudes using a multiple-item scale—
asking those surveyed their opinions about such statements as “male homosexuality is a perversion” and “lesbians just can’t fit into our society.”

In comparing the two groups’ answers, he found that criminal justice majors held more negative opinions of gays and lesbians than did non–criminal justice majors. Interestingly, however, criminal justice majors were no more likely to have negative opinions than were political science, education, or business majors (psychology majors were the least biased). He also discovered that criminal justice majors who had taken a class that had discussed gay and lesbian issues held significantly more positive attitudes toward gays and lesbians than those who had not.

Survey research is often thought of as merely a technique to determine peoples’ opinions. And while crime and justice research does measure opinions about numerous issues (e.g., do you favor torture as a method to extract information from suspected terrorists?), it just as often employs surveys to document and make sense of actual crime and justice phenomena. Kraska, for example, used survey research to inquire into police paramilitary units (SWAT teams). He surveyed a national-level random sample of 1,300 police agencies about their organization and SWAT activities. This study documented quantitatively a steep growth in police paramilitary units, a dramatic increase in their level of use during the drug war of the late 1980s, and the mainstreaming of SWAT teams into routine police functions (see Figure 1.6).

The NCVS is another good example. Instead of relying on crimes reported to the police (Uniform Crime Reports, or UCR), the NCVS measures the incidence of crime by actually asking real people about their direct experiences. Hagan and colleagues (2005) recently used this approach, conducting victimization survey research to document the genocide of Africans in the Darfur region of Sudan. Aside from determining the likely number of civilians killed, his research team was also able to demonstrate that the killings were “racially motivated, state supported, and militarily unjustified” (Hagan, Raymond-Richmond, Parker 2005: 552). In an interview with NBC news, Hagan states:

Ours is a kind of meta-analysis. We used the best of existing primary surveys—those with systematic sampling, age-specific mortality rates and some gauge on pre-camp violence—to build a cross-sectioned estimate of the rate of mortality that’s up to scholarly standards. 200,000 dead is the cautious statistical floor. That’s the low end of the range, with the actual number being even possibly over 400,000. (Dokoupil 2006: 2)
FIGURE 1.6  Police Militarization Documenting Increased Growth and Use of SWAT Teams Police Paramilitary Units (PPUs) in the United States

The two figures below were published in one of sociology’s leading journals, *Social Problems* (Kraska and Kappeler 1997). The data were collected using a survey administered to a representative sample of all police departments serving communities of 50,000 people or more. These data are referred to as “longitudinal” (gathered over time) as discussed in Chapter 2. The first shows the yearly growth of SWAT teams and the second illustrates the average number of SWAT deployments per year over a 15-year period.

**a. Year PPU Formed and Cumulative Growth**

**b. Mean SWAT Call-outs Per Year**

Chapter 1 ▪ Criminal Justice and Criminology Research: Mapping the Terrain

NONREACTIVE RESEARCH. Being asked personal questions by a researcher unknown to the respondent is clearly obtrusive. The next category of data collection involves the unobtrusive collection of data, or what is usually referred to as nonreactive research (the researcher studies crime and justice phenomena without affecting it). This type of research often collects and uses only what others have left behind (Webb 1981). Two nonreactive techniques are examined.

EXISTING DOCUMENTS/STATISTICS RESEARCH. The first nonreactive method, and the most common type of research in crime and justice studies, is existing documents/statistics research. It involves the collection and reanalysis of existing quantitative data. It is often derived from publicly available sources of information such as census bureau data, governmental crime data, economic data, and governmental survey research. The researcher reorganizes or combines the information in new ways to address a research question. As detailed in Chapter 10, some of these data can be easily accessed over the Internet. However, at times this method can require a good deal of ingenuity—especially when the researcher is gathering old data buried in the basements of government buildings or gaining access to bureaucratically sensitive data on death row inmates.

Koetting and Schiraldi (1997) conducted path-breaking international/comparative research using existing statistics. They were interested in identifying those countries with the highest incarceration rates. They compiled data from sources such as International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), the Council of Europe, the United Nations, and the U.S. Department of Justice. The researchers found that the United States had the highest rate of incarceration compared to all other countries it studied—with rates that exceeded even that of the occupied regions of Israel (i.e., the West Bank and Gaza Strip). The most recent data available on comparative incarceration rates are found in Chapter 10.

An interesting piece by Tark and Kleck (2004) in the journal Criminology examined nearly 27,595 crime incidents found in the NCVS governmental database to determine whether self-protection measures used by the victim reduced the likelihood of property loss and injury, compared to nonresistance. They found strong evidence that all forms of resistance reduced injury and property loss, with extreme forceful resistance—using a gun, for instance—having the strongest impact. The authors assert that their findings raise doubts about the commonly held belief that resistance during the commission of a crime only worsens the situation, and recommend victim self-protection measures as a “wise course of action.”

Shihadeh and Ouey (1998) used existing statistics to examine the relationship between criminal homicide and the massive departure of manufacturing jobs from central cities in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s. The manufacturing jobs provided entry-level employment for people with low-level skills. The researchers looked at one hundred U.S. cities with over 100,000 people in 1990. They used U.S. census data on types of industries located in each city and the prevalence of low-skill jobs by industry. They then combined the census data with data on homicides from the Uniform Crime Reports of the FBI. The authors found that a reduction in entry-level jobs was linked to greater economic deprivation for the local population, and economic deprivation was associated with higher criminal homicide rates for both Blacks and Whites.

CONTENT ANALYSIS. Content analysis is another nonreactive technique used to examine the content, or information and symbols, contained in written documents or other communication media (e.g., photographs, movies, song lyrics, advertisements). It is generally approached as a quantitative method, but can be employed as a qualitative method as well (see Chapter 13). To conduct quantitative content analysis, a researcher identifies a body of material to analyze (e.g., television programs, newspaper articles, governmental records, academic journal articles) and then creates a system for recording specific aspects of that body’s content. The system might include counting how often
certain words or themes appear. After the researcher systematically records what was found, she or he analyzes it, often using graphs or charts. Content analysis lets a researcher discover and document specific features in the content of a large amount of material that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Scholars have devoted a significant amount of attention and research to the role the media play in the construction of our views and opinions regarding crime and justice phenomena (referred to by academics as the “social construction of the reality of crime and criminal justice”). In order to study this process, they often employ quantitative content analysis (see Summary Table 1.2). Chermak (1995) conducted one of the better-known studies in this area. Using an array of complex sampling techniques, Chermak coded the content of 2,158 newspaper stories and 506 television stories in order to describe the nature of crime reporting and crime victimization media coverage. This comprehensive work documented quantitatively what many criminologists believed but had little empirical validation for: the media present a highly distorted and sensationalized picture of crime, offenders, and victims.

Kubrin (2005), in an example of content analysis using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, studied rap music. He examined the lyrics of all rap albums that had gone platinum (sold over a million copies) between the years 1992 and 2000, comprising 1,922 songs. He drew a random sample of 632 songs and coded them for themes such as gun violence, retaliatory violence, objectification of women, and yearning for respect. He found that 68 percent referenced respect, 65 percent referenced violence, and 22 percent referenced the objectification of women. The author focused his qualitative analysis on deciphering the rappers’ cultural code of violence and respect. By examining the meaning of the content of the lyrics, he shed light on the crucial role these “street codes” play in the formation of young men’s identity and the close connection between the values this music embraces and those of mainstream masculine culture.

**Collecting Qualitative Data.**

ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD RESEARCH. Some disciplines conduct most of their research out in the field—in the real-world settings of their subject matter. Anthropologists study humans by immersing themselves into the everyday lives of different groups’ culture. Criminology has a rich history of this type of anthropological work, or ethnographic field research.

**Ethnographic field research** strives for an up close, personal, and highly detailed understanding of its research subject’s culture. It requires time, patience, resourcefulness, and caution. Imagine involving yourself as an observer (and in some cases participant) in the real world of an inner-city drug dealer, a white supremacist skinhead, a corrupt police or correctional officer, a criminal motorcycle gang member, armed robbers, a bouncer at...
This type of research epitomizes the notion of a researcher fully immersing herself into the subject matter.

Ethnographic field research begins with a loosely formulated idea or topic. Next, researchers select a social group or site for study. Once they gain access to the group or site, they adopt a social role in the setting and begin observing. The researchers observe and interact in the field setting for a period from a few months to several years. They get to know personally the people being studied and may conduct hundreds of informal interviews. They take detailed notes about the settings they immerse themselves in, their interactions and observations of those being studied, participants’ use of language, the conflicts and tensions, espoused values, and participant actions. During the observation, they consider what they observe and refine or focus ideas about its cultural (and sometimes political) significance. Finally, they leave the field site, analyze their notes and experience, and prepare written reports.

A landmark study on armed robbery conducted by Wright and Decker (1997) provides a good example of crime and justice field research. Unlike most previous research on this topic, which tends to focus on armed robbers after they have been arrested and incarcerated, these two authors actually spent time in the natural environment of active armed robbers in St. Louis, Missouri. This street-level view of armed robbery offered fresh insights into the methods, motives, and meanings of committing armed robbery from the robbers’ point of view. Much of their study contains verbatim quotes from conversations with armed robbers on such topics as how and why criminals select certain victims and not others. The authors drew on their rich field experience to suggest more effective avenues for robbery prevention and future research.

Jeff Ferrell (1993) also conducted an important ethnography. He spent three years as a participant-observer with a group of graffiti artists. He spent hundreds of hours in dark railroad yards, abandoned buildings, alleys, and other discarded spaces in inner-city Denver. He studied the inner workings and culture of these underground artists. He also researched the political reaction to their work and the processes involved in “criminalizing” this activity. The book is rich in graphic descriptions of the settings, emotions, and motivations of his research subjects. Ferrell (1993: 197) concluded that creating graffiti represents, for its artists, not criminality but a stylized form of cultural resistance to governmental and corporate control: “It stands as a sort of decentralized and decentralized insubordination, a mysterious resistance to conformity and control, a stylish counterpunch to the belly of authority.”

Qualitative document analysis (QDA) attempts to make theoretical sense of documents by analyzing their cultural meaning. The content of documents is generally seen as its “text,” but recently this genre of inquiry includes visual images as well (still pictures and video images). Kubrin’s rap research (discussed previously), for instance, deciphered the predominant cultural themes within rap lyrics (toughness, revenge, respect, etc.) as a means to better understand the formation of some young men’s identity and the connection between their identities and the larger cultural context within which they are formed. It is worth noting that Kubrin could have incorporated as well a content analysis of the visual images used on the album covers or associated videos—images of guns, expensive cars and jewelry, drugs, sexually objectified women, or scenes of physical violence.

Unlike its quantitative relative, QDA does not follow a standard protocol in trying to decipher the meaning of the text/images it is analyzing. This should not be confused, however, with being nonsystemic. Altheide (1987: 68), who has used his own version of QDA to analyze police computer communications, describes its method:
The aim is to be systematic and analytic, but not rigid. Although categories and “variables” initially guide the research, others are allowed and expected to emerge as the study progresses. Ethnographic content analysis is embedded in constant discovery and constant comparison or relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meaning, and nuances.

Chapter 13 will examine the qualitative analysis of documents and images in more depth.

**Historical research.** Historical research examines past events systematically in an effort to accurately describe and account for what has happened in the past (Berg 2007). It involves the collection and analysis of historical facts, dates, figures, and events in order to tell a story—one that is accurate; identifies the driving forces at play; details the individual personalities of key figures; and captures the social, political, and/or cultural circumstances surrounding the phenomenon studied. Of course, in the reconstructing and telling of this story, the researcher’s perspectives and interpretations become part of the analysis. Historians, in fact, fully acknowledge the interpretive nature of their work and routinely concede to the reader the point of view(s) through which they are working.

Criminology/criminal justice has a rich but scattered literature on the history of crime and the various components of the criminal justice system. Fascinating historical work has been done on parole, police, juvenile justice, homicide, and drug laws, to name just a few. David Garland (2005) recently published a noteworthy piece of historical scholarship in the journal *Law and Society Review*. Garland targets an ugly chapter in American history: the 4,000 officially reported lynchings of African Americans between 1882 and 1940. He was specifically interested in the several hundred lynchings that constituted a “public event,” meaning that large crowds (sometimes numbering in the thousands) attended the torture and killing of these individuals. Garland (2005: 94) describes the scene:

> Professional photographers set up shop at the scene of these lynchings and did a brisk business selling photo-souvenirs of the event. Images of mutilated black bodies, some of them horribly burned and disfigured, were purchased as picture postcards, and passed between friends and families like holiday mementoes, dutifully delivered by the U.S. mail.

Garland’s task was to make theoretical sense of these very public acts of cruelty and barbarity. He did so by examining the thinking and rationale of those who conducted, sanctioned, and supported lynchings. He discovered that public torture lynchings were deliberately staged as reactionary events, insisting that the due process and “civilized” punishments of the newly reformed criminal justice system were too good for Black offenders. He further argued that modern ideas of justice and punishment, espoused by Northeastern elites with their “civilized sensibilities,” were no match for the insecurity, racism, and vengeful tendencies of those in rural southern areas who were struggling to maintain White supremacy.

An important branch of historical research is labeled historical-comparative research. Its emergence coincides with crime and justice studies’ increasing interest in international/comparative research. Historical-comparative research examines aspects of social and political life across different cultures and eras. Sometimes researchers focus on one historical period or several, compare one or more cultures, or mix historical periods and cultures. It combines theory with data collection. As with field research, a researcher begins with a loosely formulated question, and then refines that question during the research process. Researchers often use a mix of evidence, including existing statistics, documents (e.g., books, newspapers, diaries, photographs, and maps), observations, and interviews.

Anthony Marx (1998) conducted an interesting historical-comparative study of criminal justice and racial oppression in the United States, South Africa, and Brazil, which all had a large subordinate African population. He asked why a racially oppressive criminal justice system, Jim Crow–type segregation, and an apartheid system did not develop in Brazil. Marx spent six years examining the histories of the three nations; traveling to
numerous research centers, archives, and libraries in each country; and interviewing hundreds of people in English and Portuguese. He concluded that government-supported political oppression against Africans arose in countries that had violent conflict among Whites (the U.S. Civil War and South Africa’s Boer War). Racially dominating Blacks was a way to unify all Whites around national goals and to override regional, political, and class differences among them. This dynamic was not present in Brazil.

**ACADEMIC LEGAL RESEARCH.** Methods textbooks in crime and justice studies overlook an obvious fact when reviewing research—we study the law. Note in Table 1.2 that 6 percent of academic publications use legal research as their primary method; a much higher percentage incorporate legal research as a secondary method. In fact, research focusing on criminal justice phenomena often has a legal dimension. A few examples help demonstrate this fact. If a study on SWAT teams finds that the most common form of SWAT deployments are for drug raids, then it would be prudent to analyze Supreme Court rulings, legislative statutes, and the case law associated with drug searches using SWAT teams often called no-knock or quick-knock drug raids. Studying “super-max” prisons as a disciplinary tool in the U.S. prison system would require research on the case law and legal challenges relevant to this practice. Inquiring into the differences in how the criminal justice system handles crack versus powder cocaine would involve an examination of federal drug laws and their judicial interpretation. Clearly, an examination of macro-shifts in how the U.S. Supreme Court applies the Bill of Rights to criminal justice operations would require a detailed analysis of case law.

Many think of legal research as something that practicing attorneys and paralegals conduct in order to convince the court of an argument about the law. We can label this “technical legal research.” What we’re concerned with in this book, however, is **academic legal research.** Although it uses some of the same techniques as technical legal research, academic legal research is simply the systematic collection and analysis of legal-related documents in order to generate knowledge about a given crime and justice subject. Academic legal research is published in law journals, social science journals, and scholarly books.

Whether technical or academic, all legal research relies on what legal analysts call “primary and secondary sources of legal authority.” Primary sources of authority can come in the form of previous judicial decisions, legislative statutes, and legislative histories. Secondary authorities include law journal articles, comments from members of the judiciary (e.g., a Supreme Court justice giving a speech), and scholarly legal treatises. The information derived from both of these sources is analyzed as a type of data, as with any other research method, to answer certain research questions.

It is important to recognize that although some crime and justice research relies exclusively on legal research, it is most often used in conjunction with more traditional social science methods. Chapter 13 will explore, for example, one approach known as socio-legal research. Several journals specialize in this blending of social research methods and legal research, including the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* and *Law and Society Review.*

Collins and Vaughn (2004) provide a good example of academic legal research published in the *Journal of Criminal Justice.* Mike Vaughn, the second author, has published a large volume of work using legal research methods found in leading journals. The authors studied the civil liability of sexual harassment in criminal justice agencies. They collected all federal lower court judicial decisions that had applied the case law for sexual harassment established in three recent Supreme Court rulings. Through a detailed qualitative analysis of these cases, the authors identify trends in how the courts are dealing with lawsuits filed against criminal justice agencies for sexual harassment. Among other findings, the analysis of case law demonstrated that criminal justice agencies will be held liable for violating sexual harassment laws unless they: (1) immediately investigate all sexual harassment complaints, (2) transfer the harassing employee to a different unit, (3) administer
appropriate disciplinary action where warranted, and (4) thoroughly train and educate all
employees in the appropriate response and handling of sexual harassment. Notice that
these research findings provide clear policy prescriptions for criminal justice organizations.

**MIXED METHODS RESEARCH.** We mentioned earlier that quantitative and qualitative
research methods each have their own unique strengths. Most researchers are moving
beyond “one-versus-the-other” thinking and recognizing the cumulative strength of
using both (see Summary Table 1.3). **Mixed methods research,** then, is simply the
mixture of quantitative and qualitative techniques in a single study or series of studies
on the same topic. About 6 percent of articles examined used a combined approach.

The SWAT research mentioned earlier provides a good example. One objective of
this research was to inquire into whether the rapid growth in size and use of SWAT teams
signaled a blurring of the traditional line delineating civilian police from the U.S. mili-
tary (a global standard of democratic governance). Survey research of police depart-
ments serving 50,000 people or more yielded an interesting finding: 46 percent of
departments received training from “active-duty military experts in special operations.”
Because of the limitations of survey research, it could not shed light on the nature of this
arrangement. Eighty-one follow-up in-depth interviews, from a sample of respondents,
provided important qualitative insights into what was occurring. The following is a rep-
resentative quote from a SWAT commander:

> We’ve had special forces folks come right out of the jungles of Central and South
America. These guys get into the real shit. All branches of the military service are
involved in providing training to law enforcement. U.S. Marshals act as liaisons between
the police and military to set up the training—our go-between. I just received a piece of
paper from a four-star general who tells us he’s concerned about the type of training we’re
getting. We’ve had teams of Navy Seals and Army Rangers come here and teach us every-
thing. We just have to use our judgment and exclude the information like: “at this point
we bring in the mortars and blow the place up.” (Kraska and Kappeler 1997: 13)

Notice how the qualitative information found in this passage complements the strength
of survey research’s ability to document quantitatively what is a nationwide phenomenon.

### WHY DO WE CONDUCT RESEARCH?

Having gained an appreciation for what we research, who does it, and how they do it,
we’ll next examine the different purposes that underlie research. Some researchers
examine crime and justice phenomena purely out of intellectual curiosity, with little or
no concern about how the findings might be used to affect a problem or help others make better decisions. They pursue knowledge for knowledge’s sake. Others focus on pragmatic research projects, attempting to solve problems, assist in more rational decision making, or reform policy. These two orientations are referred to as basic research, and applied research, respectively. As we’ll discover, the line distinguishing between these two types in crime and justice research is quite blurry. Let’s explore each in more detail.

Basic Research

Basic research generates knowledge for the sake of knowledge. What does this mean? Put simply, generating knowledge is an end in and of itself. It has no utility beyond making us more knowledgeable. The traditional notion of a university was a place where scholars pursued knowledge only for the purpose of better understanding humans, society, or the natural environment. A university professor was to generate disinterested knowledge—knowledge not pursued for any instrumental purpose, but merely for the sake of making ethical, intellectual, and theoretical sense of our world. This is why basic research is sometimes still referred to as “pure” research—an attempt no doubt to distance it from the negative trappings of the knowledge/power dynamic discussed earlier.

Whereas crime and justice studies is more of an applied discipline, basic research still plays a critical role. We produce foundational knowledge refuting or supporting theories that explain crime, theorize major historical and contemporary shifts in our reaction to crime, and examine how both fit into our social structure and culture. This type of basic research is the source of most new ideas, insights, and differing ways of thinking about our field of study. Its primary audience is the academic community.

The worth of basic research can be hard for some to appreciate. It seems to epitomize the academic “egghead” residing in the ivory tower uninterested in making an impact on the real world. This is especially true in a field dealing with people’s suffering: we should only produce knowledge capable of ameliorating real-world problems. Two justifications for basic research are worth considering.

First, there is room for a small group of scholars to approach their research with the same mind-set as an astronomer or a paleontologist. Studying stars or dinosaurs has few practical benefits, yet uncovering their hidden secrets is a fascinating pursuit that interests millions of people. Some researchers approach crime and justice phenomena the same way. They find the same type of intellectual value in researching the why of serial murdering, the history of drug laws, the growth of the surveillance society, or the subculture of the police. Gaining clearer insight and better understanding about these topics should be seen as valuable in and of itself.

Still, doesn’t basic research have any worth beyond enhancing our knowledge? Absolutely. The second reason is that basic research provides a foundation of understanding that can change the way we think and how we approach problems. The really big breakthroughs in understanding and significant advances in knowledge usually come from basic research and scholarship. It is, indeed, the source of most of the tools—methods, theories, and ideas—that applied researchers use.

How we deal with juvenile delinquency, for example, is directly related to our perceptions of its causes. Scientifically developing and testing juvenile crime theory might seem at first irrelevant to police officers, juvenile probation officers, or social workers dealing with youthful offenders. Yet it is basic research that stimulates new ways of thinking about juvenile deviance and crime, which in turn harbors the potential to revolutionize and dramatically improve what practitioners do. Crime control policies and practices will be ineffective and misguided if they fail to filter their real-world practices through a scientifically generated body of basic knowledge.
Applied Research

**Applied research** can also build new knowledge, but for a different purpose. Those involved in applied research conduct a study to address a specific concern or to offer solutions to a problem. Applied researchers rely on studies usually conducted over a short time period designed to yield practical results that people can use. For example, the student government of University X wants to know whether the number of University X students who are arrested for driving while intoxicated will decline if it sponsors alcohol-free parties next year. Applied research, probably in the form of an experiment, would be most applicable for this situation.

A great deal of applied research is conducted in criminal justice agencies, social service agencies, interest groups, and educational institutions. The goal is to base real-world decision making on solid research—or what we can refer to as **evidence-based practice**. Applied research affects practitioner decisions such as starting a new program to reduce heroin addiction with an alternative prescription drug, or assessing the effectiveness of adopting a new police response to reduce spousal abuse.

Applied research does not fit the idealized and romantic image of a social researcher having total freedom to pursue knowledge without any impediments. The idealized researcher is independent, has sufficient funds for a study, and maintains complete control over what to study and how to study it. A contrast to this image of the autonomous researcher is the reality of applied research.

Applied research often depends on others for research funds and the researcher is expected to find answers to the sponsor’s questions. Someone other than the researcher usually decides the topic and scope of the research question. Other conditions of funding may include restrictions to examine certain issues but not others, limits on the time to complete a study, specification of the techniques to be used or people to be contacted in a study, and directions about how and when to disseminate findings. This is not meant to imply that applied research is inherently biased; rather, it is just more sensitive to the power/knowledge dynamic.

Applied research is central to crime and justice studies. Most crime and justice academics would agree that our collective mission, as a part of the knowledge generation process, includes: the reduction of crime and its associated harms, the promotion of justice, and the enhancement of government responsiveness.

All of these pursuits require quality research that assists in these efforts. The mandatory arrest experiments discussed earlier are a solid example. The research question pursued was precise and relevant to police and the victims of domestic violence: does arresting the abuser reduce the likelihood of future violence? Similarly, hundreds of experimental and applied research studies have inquired into the effectiveness of efforts targeted at rehabilitating offenders. Francis Cullen (2005) emphasizes the critical role researchers have played in “saving rehabilitation.”

These scholars rejected the “nothing works” professional ideology and instead used rigorous science to show that . . . offenders were not beyond redemption, and that treatment programs rooted in criminological research were capable of meaningfully reducing recidivism. Their story is a reminder that, under certain conditions, the science of criminology is capable of making an important difference in the correctional enterprise, if not far beyond.

Given its criticality to crime and justice studies and the practicing world, applied research will be incorporated throughout this book (although, as seen below, it will most often be referred to as **evaluation research**). Highlight 1.3 provides a look at the path one criminologist has taken in an attempt to make a difference in the practicing community.
MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

A little recognized or discussed phenomenon is the large number of crime and justice researchers who actively work at making a difference in the so-called real world. We could have highlighted literally hundreds of individuals who use their research skills and academic talents to help the communities they live in, improve the lives of at-risk children, work against government policies they disagree with (e.g., the death penalty), assist women and girls victims of rape and domestic violence, and so on. The list is immense. We will attempt to note the work of some of these crime and justice researchers throughout the book but it is appropriate here, in the section on applied research, to highlight one example.

Todd R. Clear is a Distinguished Professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York. He’s also the director of the Program of Doctoral Studies in Criminal Justice, the CUNY Graduate Center. Dr. Clear has spent much of his career simultaneously researching and assisting the practicing community. He has been highly committed to making a difference not only in the criminal justice system but also in how we handle the crime problem as a society. He explains his commitment:

I went to grad school in 1971 in order to study corrections and become a prison warden. Then, in my first month there, Attica happened. It changed everything for me. I decided I wanted to dedicate my work (my career) to reducing the use of incarceration. That meant I started working on probation and parole projects as alternatives to incarceration. My first few jobs were working for Vince O’Leary as staff to training and development projects on probation supervision. I did my dissertation on probation in three different organizations, looking at the nature of supervision objectives for probationers. As much as prisons had fascinated me since my senior year in college (when I did an internship at Indiana State Reformatory in Pendleton) I found community-supervision even more compelling. What I believed then was this: if we could create a credible and effective alternative way to keep people in the community, prisons would become less popular. From about 1981 to about 1994, I worked on a host of community-based probation and parole supervision projects, traveling to (I suppose at least) 40 states in the process and dealing with P&P [probation and parole] line staff and administrators around the country.

The lessons of that string of work have led me most recently to become an advocate for a new and emerging idea of justice: community justice. In more recent years, my work has taken me less into criminal justice agencies and more directly into communities affected by criminal justice policy.

Clear has published several books dealing with the concept of community justice. Instead of focusing exclusively on crime and criminal justice problem solving, he concentrates primarily on community problem solving (often with the assistance of the CJS), and

... restoring victims and communities, strengthening normative standards, and effectively reintegrating offenders. Together, these diverse initiatives can be seen at a new and emerging view of justice at the community level. The concept of community justice can be seen as a challenge to traditional criminal justice practices and concepts that draw distinct boundaries between the role of the State and the role of communities in the justice process. In a community justice model, priority is given to the community, enhancing its responsibility for social control while building its capacity to achieve this and other outcomes relevant to the quality of community life. (Karp and Clear 2000: 2)

Clear is also the founding editor of the applied journal Crime and Public Policy. The journal demonstrates Dr. Clear’s commitment to policy-based research and debate that will yield tangible benefits for those affected by crime and criminal justice.
Beyond the Basic/Applied Distinction

Although instructive, the basic/applied distinction has its shortcoming in organizing our particular field of study. There are two general audiences for applied research in our field. The first is those agencies sponsoring an applied study. We discussed earlier how many academics contracted out by agencies, and practitioners themselves, conduct research to solve or shed light on an immediate organizational problem. These types of studies are only occasionally published in academic journals.

The second audience for applied research is other academics, and only indirectly for practitioners. Crime and justice research emphasizes the importance of publishing applied research in academic journals as a means to develop the field’s body of practical knowledge (this is not to infer that theoretical knowledge is not practical; see Chapter 3). Crime and justice studies has developed a rich body of applied work found in most of its leading journals. The hope is that our field can accrue a useable body of practical knowledge for crime and justice practitioners and policy makers to draw from (i.e., evidence-based practice).

Clearly, much of the research and the researchers in our field, therefore, do not fit comfortably into the basic/applied dichotomy. Many do both simultaneously. Developing our basic knowledge about the causes of crime, for instance, is also a practical endeavor in guiding crime control policy. Determining whether criminal justice punishment deters crime is an intensely researched theoretical field, which simultaneously is trying to answer the evaluative question of whether deterrence works to control crime. The same is true in the theory and research on rehabilitating criminal offenders.

The Four Purposes of Research

The basic/applied dichotomy, although an important distinction for learning about the nature of research, has its limitations. Let’s now look at a more specific and relevant categorization of research purposes. The purposes of crime and criminal justice research can be organized into four groups based on what the researcher is trying to accomplish:

- *explore* a new phenomenon or issue,
- *describe* a phenomenon,
- *explain* why something occurs,
- *evaluate* practices and policy.

It is important to be aware from the outset that many crime and justice studies combine elements of these differing purposes. We already noted above how *evaluation* research targeted at determining what works to control crime can also be attempting to test the *explanatory* strength of deterrence theory. Likewise, we could *explore* the underground world of graffiti artists by providing a rich *description* of that setting.

**Exploratory research.** *Exploratory research* investigates new crime and justice territory. New territory can include studying new subjects, trying out new research methods, or looking into the feasibility of undertaking a more in-depth study. Earlier we mentioned that our young discipline is still charting its boundaries. Combine this with an ever-mutating crime and crime control situation, and conditions are perfect for exploratory researchers. Whereas many disciplines are left with merely reanalyzing a new twist on previous research, opportunity abounds in crime and justice for discovering new frontiers of knowledge. Please take note of Highlight 1.4 which demonstrates the myriad exploratory research ideas available to our field.

The goals of the exploratory researcher are to uncover new and potentially important crime and justice phenomena, and to formulate more precise questions that future research can answer. Exploratory research may be the first stage in a sequence of stud-
A researcher sometimes needs to conduct an exploratory study in order to know enough to design and execute a second, more systematic and extensive study. Exploratory research rarely yields definitive answers. It is difficult yet exciting to conduct because there are few guidelines to follow. Everything is potentially important, steps are not well defined, and the direction of inquiry changes frequently. This can be frustrating for some researchers, who may feel adrift; for others, its surprises and uncertainty are exhilarating. Exploratory researchers frequently use qualitative techniques, survey research, and existing data and they are less wedded to a specific theory or research question.

Exploratory researchers must be creative, open-minded, and flexible; adopt an investigative stance; and explore all sources of information. They ask out-of-the-box questions and take advantage of serendipity, those unexpected or chance factors that have larger implications. As an example, Kraska and several graduate students have been working on an exploratory research project for the past three years that began with a simple story conveyed by a real estate agent. While looking for a new house, Kraska was told a heart-wrenching story. A twenty-eight-year-old father of three children was delivering supplies in a small truck. He crossed over double yellow lines to pass another vehicle (that was traveling at fifteen miles an hour below the posted speed limit). He did not see the oncoming car, which turned out to be occupied by his own uncle, resulting in a

**HIGHLIGHT 1.4**

**A SAMPLE OF POTENTIAL EXPLORATORY RESEARCH TOPICS**

This highlight presents a revealing illustration of the immense exploratory research possibilities in our field. We examined several newspaper Web sites during a two-week period while writing this chapter (e.g., CNN, Washington Post, January 24 to February 6, 2006). We scanned headline topics looking for potential objects of study that have not been researched or that little is known about. The following topics would all make for potentially worthwhile exploratory research projects:

- Stolen body parts are sold in a black market scheme to be used in legitimate medical procedures (subject: body-part trafficking) (CNN).
- High-potency methamphetamine from Mexico fills in supply gaps resulting from domestic law enforcement efforts (subject: mutating methamphetamine market due to law enforcement pressure) (Los Angeles Times).
- Soldier convicted of negligent homicide in torture-related death receives no jail time (subject: commission of crimes during the prosecution of Iraq War) (CNN).
- Corporate executives receive jail time while corporations themselves receive no official punishment (subject: individual corporate offenders being used as scapegoats) (Mother Jones).
- Crime scene investigators claim criminals are using tactics learned on television to clean up and cover up their crimes (e.g., bleach eliminates all traces of blood) (subject: unintended consequences of CSI cultural fad) (CNN).
- Off-duty police officer is shot and killed by another officer (subject: friendly fire casualties in war on crime) (CNN).
- Sadaam Hussein trial deteriorates into chaos (subject: international criminal courts and trials of major political figures) (BBC News).
- Retail giant Target, Inc., uses its own state-of-the-art forensics lab to assist local and federal police with difficult crimes (subject: public/private security blur) (Washington Post).

These examples collected from a cursory examination of current events should demonstrate that the crime and justice field is wide open for generating new knowledge about a host of undiscovered issues and phenomena. Think about which research methods discussed earlier might be used to generate knowledge about these various subjects.

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head-on collision (no substance abuse was involved). The uncle died, the nephew lived, and despite strong pleas from the entire family system (including his wife and three children), the nephew’s actions were seen as sufficient grounds to convict him of involuntary manslaughter and he was sentenced to six years in state prison.

Note that the nephew had no intention (mens rea) of killing his uncle; only ten years ago it would have been defined not as a crime but a tragic accident. This tragic story piqued Kraska’s research interests, leading to a long-term, state-funded exploratory research project. Notice the exploratory tone found in the text of the grant proposal:

The overall purpose of this proposed research is to identify, document, and theorize a potential macro-change in criminal law and its application. Redefining accidents and acts of negligence as serious criminality has profound implications for our society and the criminal justice system. We could view this phenomenon in several different ways:

- the erosion of “intent” (or mens rea) as a necessary element in an event being defined as serious crime;
- an extension of the criminal law into what were once considered accidents in the least, and civil law events at the most;
- an increasing tendency in society to criminalize harmful events that have been traditionally defined as mere accidents, acts of negligence, or the result of “risky” behavior. (Kraska)

Description. We may have a more highly developed idea about a crime and justice phenomenon and want to describe it. Descriptive research presents a detailed picture of a situation, social setting, or relationship. Much of the crime and justice research found in scholarly journals, or used for making policy decisions, has a descriptive purpose.

In descriptive research, the researcher begins with a well-defined subject and conducts research to describe it accurately. The outcome of a descriptive study is a detailed picture of the subject. For example, results may indicate the percentage of people who hold a particular view or engage in specific behaviors—for example, that 10 percent of parents physically or sexually abuse their children. Recall Hagan’s research on the Darfur genocide—one of the researcher’s central goals was to describe the event both quantitatively and qualitatively.

A descriptive study presents a picture of what is, how something occurs, or who is involved. Exploring new issues or explaining why something happens is less of a concern for descriptive researchers than describing how things are. Descriptive research employs most data-gathering techniques—surveys, field research, legal research, content analysis, and historical research. Experimental research is not used for descriptive purposes.

Robin Haarr (2005) has completed some fascinating descriptive research (it is also exploratory). She works as both a university professor and as a researcher for the Swiss government as part of a program designed to provide assistance to the country Tajikistan. Tajikistan experienced a civil war from 1992–1997, which caused the deaths of 60,000 people and resulted in economic ruin for the country. Haarr was brought in to deal with the problems of violence against women and child abuse in Tajik society.

Through survey research and group interviews (discussed in Chapter 12 as focus groups), Haarr was able to establish a baseline description, both quantitative and qualitative, of the attitudes about and prevalence of wife abuse (see Figure 1.7 and Table 1.3). Aside from raising consciousness about the problem, the baseline numbers will be used to determine the extent to which proposed measures to reduce violence against women in Tajikistan are having an impact (i.e., evaluation research).

Explanation. When you encounter an issue that is already known and have a description of it, you might begin to wonder why things are the way they are. The desire
to know why, to explain something, is the purpose of *explanatory research*. It builds on exploratory and descriptive research and goes on to identify the reason something occurs. Explanatory research looks for causes and reasons. For example, a descriptive researcher may discover that 10 percent of parents abuse their children, whereas the explanatory researcher is more interested in learning why parents abuse their children. As discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3, explanatory research is extremely important in crime and criminal justice studies.

Researchers use multiple strategies when conducting explanatory research. Some explanatory studies develop a novel explanation and then provide empirical evidence either in support of it or against it. Other studies outline two or more competing explanations and then present evidence for each, in a type of “head-to-head” comparison to see which is the strongest. Still others take an existing explanation, often derived from
crime theory literature, and extend it to explain a new issue, setting, or group of people. Finally, some develop theory from the ground up by immersing themselves in the real-world setting of the behavior they are trying to explain (note the armed-robbery ethnography discussed earlier). The goal is to develop a theory of what the researcher learns at the ground level and to see whether it needs to be modified or is limited to operating under certain conditions only.

Explanatory research can be either quantitative or qualitative (or it can be both) and it can employ nearly every major research method covered in this text. Recall that Garland’s historical research on American public lynchings had an explanatory objective. Along with a rich description of these events, he explained lynchings as both a means to racial domination and as a type of cultural backlash to the enlightenment notion of civilized punishment.

Biologically based theories of crime present us with an interesting view of explanatory research. Some of our earliest theories of crime posited that the biological makeup of an individual was the determining factor in their propensity to commit or not commit crimes (see Chapter 2 on Cesare Lombroso). These explanations fell out of favor among crime theorists because they did not hold up to empirical scrutiny and they harbored disturbing practical implications (i.e., if the “genetically deficient” commit crime then we should . . .).

They are making a strong comeback. Biologically based research has been published recently in the most prestigious journals using rigorous research methodologies and statistical techniques. The explanations are sophisticated, blending psychological factors, environmental/social factors, and genetic factors. They avoid the simple and easy-to-refute notion that “genes cause crime.” Instead, they posit that certain biological/genetic traits can predispose someone to engage in antisocial behavior, and biological variables should be incorporated into our explanations of crime. This approach allows for environmental and even free-choice influences.

Evaluation. Evaluation research attempts to determine the effectiveness of a program, policy, or method. It is the most widely used type of research conducted for, and used in, criminal justice bureaucracies (both public and private). Its overall objective is to discover what works and how to best accomplish goals—what we referred to earlier as evidence-based practice. It can be conducted using most methods discussed in this book; consequently, it will be discussed throughout.

Evaluation research brings with it an ethic of accountability and critical thinking—at least within the parameters of the question, what works? Oftentimes practices and policies are not questioned due to:

1. engrained tradition (“we’ve always done it that way”),
2. their comfortable fit with prevailing ideology (“getting tough on juvenile delinquents is what people and politicians want”), or
3. the fear of losing a source of funding (“we don’t want to know if these Homeland Security grants are actually accomplishing anything; we need the money”).

Evaluation research, in its ideal form, sets aside all these rationalizations; asks the hard question of whether a practice is working; and then unflinchingly provides an answer using rigorous experiments, survey research, existing data analysis, and qualitative techniques. Francis Cullen’s comments earlier, about applied research testing the efficacy of correctional rehabilitation programs, embodied this evaluative spirit.

The Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program is another excellent example. This is a nationwide program (which is also implemented in forty-two other countries), costing taxpayers millions of dollars to expose children to preventive infor-
information about illegal drugs. This program is extremely popular with politicians, schools, students, the police, and parents. In fact, many of you reading this text probably attended a D.A.R.E. program. The D.A.R.E. program’s many proponents make it difficult for those who raise questions about its effectiveness to be listened to. The federal government nonetheless has sponsored numerous evaluative studies to determine if this program is accomplishing its central objective: reducing the likelihood of children using illegal drugs as they grow up.

Rosenbaum and Hanson (1998) conducted a difficult to ignore experimental study using random assignment and multiple control groups. They tracked longitudinally all participants in their control and treatment groups from the sixth grade to twelfth grade (over a five-year period during what are considered to be the drug-prone years). The authors found that D.A.R.E. had no preventive effect on its participants as compared to the control groups. If judged solely on its central objective, D.A.R.E. failed. D.A.R.E. probably had some positive outcomes—fostering more positive police-community relations, and helping politicians, school officials, and the police feel good about being involved in antidrug actions. However, a body of disinterested research has raised serious doubts about whether these actions reduce drug use among teenagers.

Not surprisingly, D.A.R.E. advocates have used these negative findings to argue that more D.A.R.E. efforts are needed, not fewer, especially during the high school years. Failure is often construed by those with vested interests in a program as a reason to do more of the same. Consistent with the power/knowledge dynamic discussed earlier, ethical and political conflicts often arise in crime and justice evaluation research because people have opposing interests in the results. Highlight 1.5 further illustrates the controversial nature of governmentally sponsored evaluation.

The real-world practices of those working in the criminal justice system, and of course all those other entities that can have an impact on the crime problem, are of serious consequence. Their policies and everyday practices have a profound impact on the health and welfare of victims of crime, arrestees, convicted offenders, and public safety. The death penalty is a poignant example. Much of the debate on the death penalty boils down to an evaluative question: does the execution of convicted murderers deter future murders? The answer, determined by evaluative research, could literally mean the difference between life and death.

The death penalty example raises one final point about evaluation research and critical thinking. By inquiring only into what works, ethical concerns get pushed to the periphery. What if we found that closely monitored police surveillance cameras and microphones in all public and business spaces reduced crime? Or we discovered that giving psychotropic drugs to all children as they grow would make for a more effective and easier socialization process, thereby reducing crime? Just because something works...
does not mean it is ethically desirable or a just course of action. Evaluative findings should always be tempered with careful ethical deliberation and discussion.

THE RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH

There are few subjects in a criminology/criminal justice degree program more tangibly beneficial to students, future practitioners, and current practitioners than research methods. This chapter has discussed several reasons why this is the case. Let’s review them and point out a few others (as reviewed in Summary Table 1.4).

We hope one benefit is obvious—crime and justice research is interesting. The various objects of study reviewed and their associated research methods hopefully piqued your interest to learn. Generating and learning new knowledge is a central goal of the higher education system.

This is not to minimize research method’s practical benefits. Understanding the philosophies of knowledge generation (found in Chapter 3), as well as the ins and outs of conducting research, will sharpen your critical thinking skills. Rather than taking for granted what you know, and what others tell you is the “truth,” research methods mandate that knowledge claims be assessed analytically, using the criteria of reason and evidence.

A solid grasp of research methods, for example, should provide you with the skills to assess the strength of a hypothetical statement a professor might make to her or his students: “Due to a long-running culture of violence and revenge, the United States incarcerates more of its citizens than any country in the world.” Three knowledge claims would need to be assessed to determine the probable accuracy of this assertion:

1. Has violence and revenge been a historical feature of U.S. culture?
2. Does the United States incarcerate more of its citizens than any other country?
3. What evidence indicates that 1 and 2 above are causally related?

Dissecting this type of knowledge claim is essential for the closely related benefit of becoming a critical consumer of research. Research-based knowledge claims are a

SUMMARY TABLE 1.4 Tangible Benefits of Research Methods for Students

- Generating new knowledge is interesting and rewarding in and of itself.
- Sharpens critical thinking skills.
- Promotes being a critical consumer of research-based knowledge.
- Begins the process of becoming a proficient researcher.
- Highly beneficial in today’s increasingly research-oriented workplace; promotes evidence-based practices.
Chapter 1 ■ Criminal Justice and Criminology Research: Mapping the Terrain

JUSTICE OUTCOME EVALUATIONS

Design and Implementation of Studies Require More NIJ Attention

What GAO Found

From 1992 through 2002, NIJ managed 96 evaluation studies that sought to measure the outcomes of criminal justice programs. Spending on these evaluations totaled about $36.6 million. Our methodological review of 15 of the 96 studies, totaling about $15 million and covering a broad range of criminal justice issues, showed that sufficiently sound information about program effects could not be obtained from 10 of the 15. Five studies, totaling about $7.5 million (or 48 percent of the funds spent on the studies we reviewed), appeared to be methodologically rigorous in both design and implementation, enabling meaningful conclusions to be drawn about program effects. Six studies, totaling about $3.3 million (or 21 percent of the funds spent on the studies we reviewed), began with sound designs but encountered implementation problems that would render their results inconclusive. An additional 4 studies, totaling about $4.7 million (or 30 percent of the funds spent on the studies we reviewed), had serious methodological limitations that from the start limited their ability to produce reliable and valid results. Although results from 5 completed studies were inconclusive, DOJ program administrators said that they found some of the process and implementation findings from them to be useful.

We recognize that optimal conditions for the scientific study of complex social programs almost never exist, making it difficult to design and execute outcome evaluations that produce definitive results. However, the methodological adequacy of NIJ studies can be improved, and NIJ has taken several steps—including the formation of an evaluation division and funding feasibility studies—in this direction. It is too soon to tell whether these changes will lead to evaluations that will better inform policy makers about the effectiveness of criminal justice programs.


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<td>GAO’s review of 15 studies</td>
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Source: GAO analysis of NIJ data.

*Percentages may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.
pervasive part of our lives in commercials, newspapers, political campaigns, the workplace, and the doctor’s office. By being a more informed citizen, you will be able to critically analyze research in your everyday decision making.

We assume that a large percentage of students using this book either plan to work or are currently working in some crime and justice–related field. (A few might even be inspired to pursue a career as a crime and justice researcher.) Whatever the case, understanding research methods can be highly beneficial in the workplace. All crime and justice agencies are becoming more data, information, and research oriented. Today’s police or correctional administrator would be lost without a basic understanding of how to manage, solve problems, and make effective decisions using research-based information. Evidence-based practice and thinking are rapidly becoming the norm rather than the exception.

The authors have witnessed this transformation first-hand in dozens of criminal justice agencies. We’ve also witnessed college graduates making themselves invaluable to an organization because of their research method education and skills. One of Kraska’s former students and police practitioner is a good example. He worked his way quickly into the ranks of administration, ultimately becoming police chief, due in part to his abilities to answer complex agency and community questions using the research techniques he learned in a research methods course.

CONCLUSION
One of our main objectives in this chapter has been to demonstrate the relevance and importance of research methods not only in academic, but also in the real world of criminal justice. Research and the knowledge it produces harbor significant potential to influence and make a difference. We warned as well, though, about the importance of maintaining a balance between making a difference and maintaining distance. The essence of the knowledge/power dynamic is recognizing the power of research-based knowledge to influence, while guarding against the influence of power.

We also hope that you gained a big-picture appreciation for what research in criminology/criminal justice is all about. By presenting a broad overview of what we research, why we research, and how we conduct research, our aim has been to familiarize you up front with the basics so that the more detailed material in the rest of the book will be easier to assimilate.

KEY TERMS
- knowledge/power dynamic (3)
- qualitative document analysis (QDA) (19)
- crime and justice research (4)
- historical research (20)
- objects of study (4)
- historical-comparative research (20)
- crime and justice studies (5)
- academic legal research (21)
- crime and justice phenomena (6)
- basic research (23)
- expert witness research (8)
- disinterested knowledge (23)
- National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) (9)
- applied research (23)
- quantitative and qualitative research (12)
- mixed methods research (22)
- experimental research (13)
- basic research (23)
- survey and interview research (14)
- exploratory research (26)
- nonreactive research (16)
- descriptive research (28)
- existing documents/statistics research (17)
- explanatory research (29)
- content analysis (17)
- evaluation research (30)
- ethnographic field research (18)
- critical thinking (32)

REVIEW QUESTIONS
1. What is the knowledge/power dynamic and what does it have to do with crime and justice research?
2. How do we define research?
3. What are some of our major objects of research in crime and justice studies?
4. Who conducts crime and justice research and for what purposes?
Chapter 1 ■ Criminal Justice and Criminology Research: Mapping the Terrain

5. What are the four major quantitative research methods reviewed in this text?

6. What are the four major qualitative methods reviewed in this text?

7. What are the major differences between basic and applied research, and how do they sometimes overlap?

8. When is exploratory research used, and what can it accomplish?

9. What types of results are produced by a descriptive research study?

10. What is explanatory research? What is its primary purpose?

11. What is evaluation research and why is it so important to crime and justice studies?

12. What are the tangible benefits of learning research methods for students?

PRACTICING RESEARCH

1. Contact a professor in your academic program, or e-mail a professor in another academic program, and ask about his or her research activities. Find out if that person is conducting research through a grant, for journal publication, for a sponsor, or perhaps as an expert witness.

2. In the library, find a research article that uses one of the four quantitative methods reviewed in this chapter (experiments, surveys, unobtrusive measures, or content analysis). Do the same for qualitative methods. Discuss in small groups.

3. Using the same method found in Highlight 1.4, locate three more exploratory research topics. Being aware that you’ve been exposed only to limited information about different research methods, speculate about how you might go about researching these three topics.

4. In small groups, identify and discuss five key areas in the criminal justice system in need of quality evaluation research. How might you go about evaluating these areas (again, realizing that your familiarity with the available options at this point in your learning is limited)? Try this same exercise at the end of the semester.

NOTES FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

1. The “science wars” can also be found in academia. The following Web site is dedicated to exploring its trends and debates: http://members.tripod.com/ScienceWars/.

2. For an excellent discussion of this phenomenon see Ulrich Beck’s (1992), Risk Society, toward a New Modernity.

3. Marquart et al.’s (1989) research actually concentrated on specifically whether jurors could accurately predict dangerousness. As part of this analysis, though, it examined the role of expert witnesses that testified with 100 percent certainty that the convicted murderer would kill again even if incarcerated.

4. An excellent Web site that examines the statistical facts that underlie many social issues is George Mason University’s “STATS” (www.stats.org). The statistics used in this section were derived from this reputable Web site, and from Kappeler and Potter (2005).


6. This research is found in two articles (Kraska and Kappeler 1997; Kraska and Cubellis 1997) and a book (Kraska 2001).

7. The following is a powerful Web site that provides a wealth of visual information on lynching: www.withoutsanctuary.org. It includes a slide show of James Allen’s nonreactive research collecting and buying photographs of lynchings all over the United States. The images are quite graphic and disturbing, but document effectively a disturbing chapter in U.S. history.

8. Mark Lanier and Stuart Henry’s (2004, 2005) two classroom textbooks provide excellent and updated discussions of the role biology and genetics might play in crime causation.