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Research Methods FOR Criminal Justice AND Criminology

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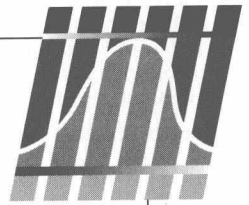
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THIRD **3** EDITION

Research Methods **for CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND CRIMINOLOGY**

THIRD
EDITION



MICHAEL G. MAXFIELD

Rutgers University

EARL BABBIE

Chapman University



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Preface

One of my most oddly rewarding teaching experiences took place not in the classroom but on the streets of downtown Indianapolis. On my way to a meeting with staff from the Indiana Department of Correction, I recognized a student from the previous semester's research methods class. Ryan was seated on a shaded bench, clipboard in hand, watching pedestrians make their way down the sidewalk. After we had exchanged greetings, I learned that Ryan had landed a summer internship with the city's planning department and was currently at work conducting a study of pedestrian traffic.

"Ha!" I exclaimed, recalling student complaints about how research methods are not relevant (what I have since referred to as "Ryan's lament"). "And you whined about how you were never going to use the stuff we talked about in class."

Ryan responded that the systematic study of pedestrians was interesting, and he admitted that some course topics did in fact relate to his work as an intern. He also said something about not really knowing what actual research involved until he began his current project. Ryan remained attentive to people passing by while we chatted for a few minutes. I was pleased to see that he was a careful observer, applying some of the skills he had learned in my course only a few weeks after the semester's end.

Later, thinking more about the encounter, I recognized the need to change my approach to teaching the course. Ryan clearly enjoyed his experience in doing research but he had not recog-

nized how much fun research could be until after he left the classroom. As a result, I restructured the course to involve students more actively in the research process. I resolved to be more diligent in linking fundamental concepts of research methods to a broad spectrum of examples, and I became determined to show students how they, like Ryan, could apply systematic inquiry and observation techniques to a wide variety of situations in criminal justice and other policy areas.

Collaborating with Earl Babbie to produce this textbook, I joined a colleague whose writing embodied my efforts to engage students in the learning process. Earl's classic text, *The Practice of Social Research*, has always been an enviable model of clarity—generating student interest while still presenting a rigorous treatment of social science research methods.

As has always been the case with *Practice*, our text illustrates principles of doing research with examples specifically selected to appeal to students. We have sought to convey something of the excitement of doing research that Ryan discovered as he observed pedestrians in downtown Indianapolis.

■ A FAMILIAR, COMFORTABLE APPROACH

This text has several distinctive features. Anyone who has taught with or learned from *The Practice of Social Research* will recognize much in our collaborative effort. This enables instructors of criminal justice research methods to organize their course around a familiar approach, capitalizing on the strengths and popularity of Earl Babbie's superb text. At the same time, we have designed our book to address the particular

Note: In this Preface, the first-person singular refers to Michael Maxfield, while the first-person plural refers to Maxfield and Earl Babbie.

needs of research methods for criminal justice and criminology.

■ FEATURES OF THE NEW EDITION

All editions of our text *Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology* have retained much of the raw material from *Practice*, albeit revised and otherwise adapted for students in criminology and criminal justice. In preparing the Third Edition, we stayed with what has proved to be a popular formula. But we have also responded to suggestions from several people—reviewers, colleagues, and instructors—who used the Second Edition.

One chapter has been deleted; a new running example has been introduced in each chapter; various features of individual chapters have been supplemented; and other smaller changes are found throughout the book. Here's an overview of what's new in this edition.

Putting It All Together: Crime in New York City

The final chapter in earlier editions presented annotated examples that illustrated many principles of research methods. Many instructors reported difficulty with this chapter, finding its placement at the book's end confusing and difficult to incorporate into traditional teaching approaches. Acting on such advice, we have replaced the final chapter with "Putting It All Together," a running example rooted in the question of whether changes in policing are responsible for decreasing crime in New York City.

This question has occupied a number of distinguished researchers, as partly reported in a special issue of the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*. We do not claim to settle the question. Instead, we invite students to consider how this example illustrates different elements of social science research, from research purposes through measurement, design, data collection, and simple analysis. In large part, information used in presenting the running example is based on an actual research project under way at the Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice.

Since the project is in progress, we cannot report final results, and we must be somewhat careful about presenting specific findings that have not been verified. However, we view this as something of an advantage, inviting instructors and students to consider the nuts-and-bolts issues of research methods evident in a work in progress.

Research Purposes

A number of revisions reflect an effort to streamline presentation of introductory material. Most notably, we have moved our discussion of research purposes to the first chapter. Students can now learn about the different reasons why we conduct research at the outset and use that information as they work through the subsequent chapters.

Policy Analysis

Reviewers and others pointed out that the Chapter 13 material on prison population forecasting implied a rather limited perspective on policy analysis in criminal justice. This edition includes more information on crime mapping and problem solving as examples of policy analysis. The prison population example has been updated and shifted from New York to Texas, the state with the country's largest prison population.

Realistic Evaluation

Chapter 13 also presents an alternative view of evaluation research. Although we have retained the extensive discussion of experimental and quasi-experimental designs, this edition includes a brief presentation of what has been called *realistic evaluation*. Our purpose here is to show how social science research methods can be very useful evaluation tools in cases where elaborate formal designs are not appropriate.

Displaying Data

Researchers at the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) have prepared a very useful publication for nonresearchers that explains the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) (Maltz and Zawitz, 1998). While the goal of this text is to produce

researchers, the visual presentation of sample data from the NCVS is a powerful illustration of how to make inferences from sample data. Chapter 14 reproduces a sample figure from Maltz and Zawitz, then shows how the visual presentation confidence intervals is an alternative to inappropriately using tests of statistical significance. Chapter 14 has also been reorganized to make the material more accessible to students.

Sampling

Chapter 9 has been extensively reworked in an effort to improve presentation of material on sampling, a topic students sometimes find especially difficult. We have also expanded the discussion of nonprobability sampling.

Measuring Crime

The Second Edition introduced a new chapter on measuring crime, an addition that was generally well-received. We have updated information on the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) to reflect expanded participation in this new uniform crime reporting program. NIBRS has not yet replaced the venerable summary-based uniform crime reports, but much has happened in the past few years. Chapter 6 draws on updated data and the first published examples of research using NIBRS, reported in a special issue of the *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*.

Another exciting development is the resurrection of city-level victim surveys, reflecting a joint project of BJS and the federal Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS). City-level surveys have great potential to enhance research on crime prevention and community policing. The BJS/COPS effort is especially noteworthy because it includes a manual for conducting community victim surveys (Weisel, 1999) together with software for drawing samples and producing a questionnaire. Chapters 6 and 10 present information on these new surveys.

The final new development in this area is continued innovation in the British Crime Survey (BCS). We introduced the BCS use of computer-assisted interviewing in the Second Edition. In this edition we describe more recent BCS use of

computer-assisted interviewing to produce better measures of domestic violence.

With these enhancements, we maintain what reviewers have termed unprecedented coverage of crime measurement in a research methods textbook. At the same time, we have been careful to present this new material at a level that is readily understood by undergraduates.

Internet and Technology

It remains impossible to publish a printed textbook that has any hope of keeping up with computer and telecommunications developments. We have woven updated material on the Internet into various parts of the text. Students will find references to web sites for a variety of publications, data, and exercises.

For example, the American Society of Criminology (ASC) has finally drafted a code of ethics. At this writing (spring 2000) the code has not been adopted by ASC members, but we refer students to the ASC web site for a copy of the draft. Tables illustrating NIBRS and NCVS revisions cite web-based sources that students can verify themselves. Chapter 14 (on interpreting data) presents some tables constructed from a General Social Survey data file that can be accessed and analyzed on-line. We invite students to replicate our calculations and learn about data analysis by doing their own.

Finally, the book's appendixes have been moved to a compact disc, and include hot links to a wide range of web sites that will be useful for criminal justice research. Instructors and students will find this an invaluable research tool, one that will lead them to libraries, data, and other research resources around the world.

■ NOTABLE FEATURES RETAINED AND UPDATED

Measurement

Many people believe that measurement presents the greatest challenge in doing social science research. We feel this is especially true for criminal justice. Students frequently alternate between be-

ing shrewd skeptics about measurement and being uncritical consumers of media reports about crime, violence, drug use, or whatever havoc happens to be in fashion. Two chapters (5 and 6) are devoted to this topic in the Third Edition; throughout the text we remind students to be careful but creative when it comes to measurement.

Design Building Blocks

Research methods seems to be one of those courses where students feel driven to memorize the book, lectures, practice questions, last semester's notes purchased from a friend, or whatever. The strange vocabulary of the subject probably encourages this tendency, which seems to be especially troublesome when teaching research design. All those Xs and Os must be faithfully recorded, memorized, and associated with the right label.

Although the XO diagrams in Chapter 7 will be familiar to many instructors, we encourage students to become engaged in learning research methods by describing how common research designs represent creative uses of design building blocks. In Chapter 7 and elsewhere we describe how the fundamentals of subject selection, making observations, and administering or withholding a treatment represent basic building blocks of design. Rather than trying to shoehorn a research problem into some pattern of Xs and Os that appears in their books, we urge students to learn what these building blocks represent and what different building blocks can be expected to accomplish.

Agency Records as Data Sources

Criminal justice, perhaps more than any other social science, commonly draws on a bewildering variety of information produced by public agencies. Reported crimes represent only the most well-known example. Students (and many researchers) too often readily accept data produced by a government organization as reliable. Following our general maxim to be careful but creative, Chapter 12 guides students through the promises and pitfalls of agency records. We describe some everyday problems researchers encounter in using such data, common sources of those problems, how to detect them, and how to deal with

them. Several examples illustrate the important lessons in Chapter 12.

Reviewers and colleagues reacted favorably to our discussion of agency records in earlier editions. This chapter remains a unique feature of our text, and we have added material to reflect the growing sophistication of data management systems in justice agencies.

Survey Research and Sampling

One of the strengths of *The Practice of Social Research* has always been a comprehensive but eminently readable treatment of sampling and survey methods. Our criminal justice text (in Chapters 9 and 10) retains Earl's general approach, but it also points to some of the more specialized criminal justice applications. These range from victim and self-report surveys to specialized interviews with nonprobability samples. Again, our approach focuses on arming students with the principles of survey methods so that they can adapt these general tools to a variety of uses.

Applied Research and Policy Experiments

We have devoted a chapter to applied criminal justice research; Chapter 13 examines program evaluation and policy analysis. In addition, we link policy and management applications to virtually every stage of the research process, from theory in Chapter 2 through data interpretation in Chapter 14. We feel this approach is crucial for two complementary reasons. First, students whose interests center on criminal justice policy must understand that applied research is as dependent on theory and reasoned expectations as is basic research. Second, basic research in criminology or criminal justice is usually conducted in some applied context, so the researcher interested in some causal proposition about, say, drug use and violence must recognize that these are not simply abstract constructs. Most measures of drug use and violence will be operationalized with legal or policy definitions of those constructs in mind.

Randomized field experiments have become the designs of choice for many applied studies. In our chapters on experimental and quasi-experimental designs (Chapter 7) and applied

research (Chapter 13), we have much to say about the advantages of randomized designs. However, we take care to caution students that all designs have weaknesses and no design is well-suited for all research purposes. Unfortunately, the weaknesses of randomized experiments are sometimes overlooked by their champions and by many textbooks. Our treatment of this topic, encouraging students to think carefully and creatively, is more balanced and will enable students to better recognize appropriate and inappropriate uses of experiments. New material on scientific realism reinforces this perspective.

Ethics

Among the social sciences, criminology and criminal justice probably present the widest array of questions about research ethics. Our treatment of this important topic (Chapter 8) again combines discussion of general principles with emphasis on the particular problems encountered by criminal justice researchers.

Statistics

Chapter 14 guides students through fundamental principles of descriptive and inferential statistics. Our coverage here is conceptual and brief, reflecting our view that criminal justice research design, measurement, and data collection require the concerted attention of students for a full semester. We also believe that understanding these issues is a necessary foundation for doing meaningful statistical analysis. Future producers and consumers of criminal justice research must understand how concepts become observations and how observations become data before they learn the details of data analysis.

At the same time, our approach to statistics is both thorough and conceptually sound. As a result, instructors who wish to cover data analysis in more detail (perhaps in a second semester course) will find Chapter 14 an excellent point of departure.

Appendices

As noted, appendices in this edition have been moved to a compact disk. Each appendix has been updated to reflect new web-based resources.

Appendix A includes examples and general information about evolving library and information technology. Depending on the availability of tools and resources on your campus, we suggest you supplement Appendix A with guides or manuals that document campus facilities and routines.

Appendix B describes the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS), a specialized library and information tool for criminal justice research and policy development. NCJRS was rather late in developing a useful web site, but now provides ready access to publications issued by Justice Department agencies. We also steer students to the excellent web site maintained by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Appendix C presents guidelines on writing research reports. If your course will require a proposal or research report, we recommend that students review this appendix early in the term. See also Chapter 4 for further information on proposals. You may wish either to supplement or to modify our suggestions to reflect your own preferences.

Appendix D describes major sources of secondary data, most notably the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD) and the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). If suitable resources are accessible, students can retrieve information about NACJD and ICPSR holdings over the Internet.

Supplements

A number of teaching resources are available to facilitate instruction and student comprehension. The supplement package includes the following:

- The *Instructor's Manual* offers very detailed chapter outlines, key terms, homework exercises, and numerous test questions in a variety of formats.
- *ExamView*® is a computerized test bank, available in Macintosh and Windows versions, featuring true-false, multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions.
- Wired Appendixes, the CD-ROM that accompanies this text, replaces the print appendixes of previous editions. In addition to incorporating relevant hot links to criminal justice

web sites, the CD includes actual criminal justice data sets in SPSS format.

- *Criminology: An Introduction Using ExplorIt*, by Steven Messner and Rodney Stark, is a MicroCase product that includes data and analysis exercises.
- *InfoTrac College Edition* is a Wadsworth exclusive that offers students round-the-clock access to full-text articles from hundreds of scholarly and popular publications.

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Newark, New Jersey

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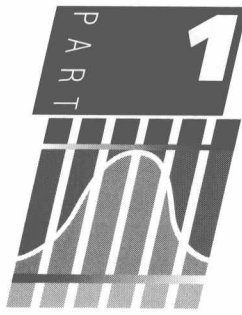
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1 *An Introduction to Criminal Justice Inquiry*

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

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

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

Part 1 of the book lays the groundwork for the rest of the book by examining the fundamental characteristics and issues that make science different from other ways of knowing things. Chapter 1 begins with a look at native

human inquiry, the sort of thing all of us have been doing all our lives. Because people sometimes go astray in trying to understand the world around them, we'll consider the primary characteristics of scientific inquiry that guard against those errors.

Chapter 2 deals specifically with the social scientific approach to criminal justice inquiry, and the links between theory and research. The lessons of Chapter 1 are applied in the study of crime and criminal justice. You will discover that, although special considerations arise in studying people and organizations, the basic logic of all science is the same.

In their attempt to develop generalized understanding, scientists seek to discover patterns of interrelationships among variables. Often, these interrelationships take a cause-and-effect form. Chapter 3 addresses the nature and logic of causation as appropriate to criminal justice research. This theoretical chapter lays the basis for later chapters on analytic techniques.

The overall purpose of Part 1 is to construct a backdrop against which to view more specific aspects of research design and execution. By the time you complete the chapters in Part 1, you'll be ready to look at some of the more concrete aspects of criminal justice research.