PART II

SETTING THE STAGE FOR YOUR RESEARCH

The first chapter in the text addressed the important questions of why research methods are important, what research methods are, and the role of ethics in research. The first chapter is intended to make clear why the material in the rest of the book is important. Research matters, and how you conduct research matters. If you do not understand why research methods matter, then learning the rest of this material is going to be more difficult (and less fun) than it should be.

In this second section of the text, we begin by describing tasks you need to accomplish to properly design your research. In this section, we cover two important topics—topics that are often neglected in methods texts. First, we provide information on how to select a research topic and develop a suitable research question. For many new researchers, this can be an intimidating task. We think, however, that given the material presented here, you will find choosing a topic you care about and using it to develop a research question, to be manageable (Chapter 2). The next major task covered in this foundation section is the literature review (Chapter 3). This topic is also generally never discussed in a methods text to the detriment of students. The literature review is frequently dreaded by students, but we strongly believe that terror stems from the fact that few students are taught how to write a literature review. The literature review material presented here offers step-by-step directions on what literature you should search for, how to search for it, and how to craft that information into an excellent literature review. We find that with the clear directions provided, student anxiety about literature reviews is greatly reduced and writing them may even be enjoyable. With these foundational steps completed, you as a researcher can move on to designing your research, which is the topic of the third section of this text.

2

IDENTIFYING A TOPIC, A PURPOSE, AND A RESEARCH QUESTION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After finishing this chapter, you should be able to:

2.1 Describe why a research topic is necessary and identify several sources for developing a research topic.

2.2 Compare and contrast the four primary purposes of research.

2.3 Identify the purpose of a research question and demonstrate your ability to evaluate a research question.

2.4 Evaluate the importance of the Federal Policy for Protection of Human Subjects, its subparts, and the role of the Common Rule.

2.5 Summarize a "vulnerable population," and identify the ways in which a group may be vulnerable.

2.6 Define "human subjects" and "research" according to the Common Rule.

INTRODUCTION

In building on the information presented in Chapter 1, this chapter addresses the initial steps in conducting research: identifying a research topic and developing it into a research question. All research is guided by interest in a topic. For example, perhaps you, like Heather Zaykowski, one of our featured researchers introduced in Chapter 1, are interested in what makes a victim of violence more or less likely to access victim services (Zaykowski, 2014). Or perhaps your interest lies in wondering about differences in young Black and White males' perceptions and experiences regarding contact with the police. Research begins with an interest in a topic

like these. Although having a topic of interest is the key, research is based on a narrower focus—a question that you as a researcher want to answer—a research question. You as a researcher conduct research to answer that research question. How then does a researcher decide on a topic of interest? And how does a researcher form a research question about that topic? Where do hypotheses fit into this process? Before moving on to the remainder of this chapter, it is informative to take a look at the wheel of science.

Wheel of Science

Science is a recursive process, meaning it is never-ending and works as a continuous loop. Knowledge created from scientific discovery leads to new ideas, these ideas lead to new testable questions, and these questions can be answered by more empirically based research. Fifty years ago, Walter Wallace created a visual depiction of this scientific process, which has become known as Wallace's **wheel of science** (Figure 2.1). Although the scientific process can begin anywhere on the wheel, the easiest way to explain it is to start at the top with "Theory" and work our way around the wheel clockwise. Please note that although we introduce the steps of the wheel of science here, the remainder of the book goes into greater detail about each stage.

Criminological **theory** provides a set of interrelated propositions (i.e., cause-and-effect statements that link unobservable concepts), assumptions, and definitions about how the world is expected to work or about how the people living in it are supposed to behave. For example, Cohen and Felson's (1979) routine activity theory suggests that when a motivated offender and a suitable target converge in space and time, and a guardian who is willing and able to prevent an incident from occurring is absent, a crime can occur. This is a popular theory for

Wheel of science: Diagram developed by Walter Wallace (1971) that illustrates the recursive nature of the scientific process of developing empirical knowledge.

Theory: Explanation about how things work. A set of interrelated propositions, assumptions, and definitions about how the world is expected to work or about how people living in it are supposed to behave.

FIGURE 2.1 ● Scientific Process as a Recursive Process

The Wheel of Science
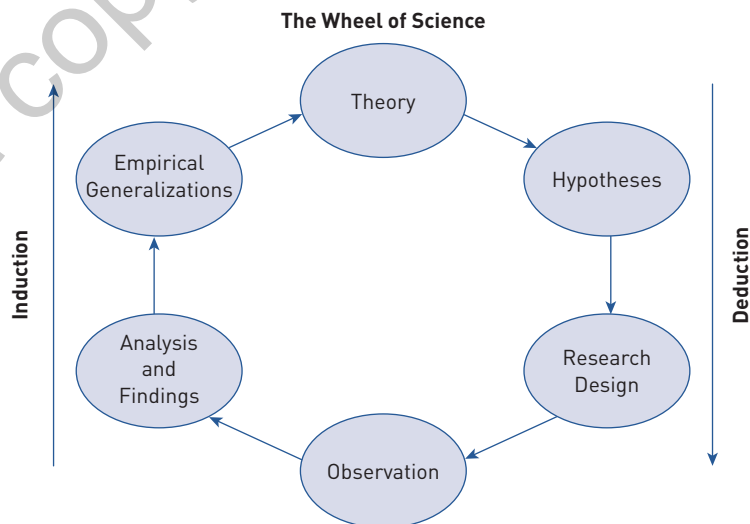
Source: Adapted from Wallace, W. (1971). *The logic of science in sociology.* Aldine.

explaining why and when crime happens, and it forms the basis of many research questions. Research questions are the overarching questions being addressed in a piece of research.

In some research, researchers develop hypotheses that they will also be testing. **Hypotheses** are statements (not questions) about expected relationships between variables. For instance, one may hypothesize that the more motivated offenders in an area, the higher the crime rates in that area. Although research questions are broad questions, hypotheses are the predictions that specific relationships or associations will be observed.

The next steps depicted in Wallace's wheel of science after establishing a research question and possibly hypotheses include (a) choosing an appropriate research methodology (i.e., research design) to answer the research question and test the hypotheses and (b) collecting data (i.e., observation) that will be analyzed as part of this process. With data in hand, the researcher then conducts analyses, develops findings to answer the research question and find support, or fails to find support, for their hypotheses. Findings tend to raise more questions and influence our understanding of theory, which begins the cycle again.

This text is focused on the scientific process. In this chapter, though, we begin with the first steps, including research questions. We present information about *why* you need a research topic, and then we offer several sources for research topic ideas. Afterward, we discuss four primary purposes or goals of the research. By using the topic and the purpose of the research selected, a discussion about the development of a research question follows. The chapter concludes with a discussion of common pitfalls associated with developing a topic, purpose, and research question as well as ethical considerations to be aware of when engaging in these preliminary research steps.

WHY IDENTIFY A TOPIC, A PURPOSE, AND A RESEARCH QUESTION?

This text presents the steps taken to conduct research in criminal justice and criminology to create new knowledge. The first step in conducting research includes selecting a research topic, identifying the purpose of the proposed research, and refining that information into a research question that will guide the research. In each of these steps, it is important that you as a researcher keep the broader purpose of what you are doing and why you are doing it in mind—you are conducting research to create new knowledge. This requires a better understanding about what does and does not constitute research. Counterintuitively, this is most easily demonstrated by identifying and making clear what research is *not.* Research is *not* an unstructured, unguided, gathering or presentation of information or facts on some topic of interest. Research is *not* summarizing or synthesizing existing information or facts on some topic found by Googling. An individual who is rearranging or compiling current knowledge on a topic is not engaging in research. Although some professors or teachers in your past may have referred to such activities as "research," these activities are not research; it may be a *part* of conducting research, but simply compiling information is not research. Why are none of those activities research? Because none of those activities are guided by a research question,

Hypothesis: Testable statement about the expected relationship between variables.

require the collection and analysis of data, and ultimately lead to the creation of new knowledge. The steps outlined in this chapter show you how to take a topic and develop a research question that will guide the remainder of the research that ultimately leads to new knowledge. A research question is developed from a topic, and being guided by a research question is one distinction between research and nonresearch activities. This is why identifying a research topic is an important first step.

HOW TO IDENTIFY A RESEARCH TOPIC

What is a **research topic**? A research topic is a subject about which you are intellectually curious as well as a subject you are eager to investigate to develop greater knowledge. Being genuinely interested in a research topic is essential. Conducting research takes time and energy, and without a genuine interest in and curiosity about that topic, it will be drudgery and a chore. In contrast, selecting a research topic of great interest makes research gratifying and enjoyable. To select a research topic, you should ask questions such as "What do I care about?" "What intrigues me?" "What would I like to learn more about?" "What puzzles me?" With some curiosity, imagination, and a desire to learn, you will find fascinating and fun research topics.

If these questions do not result in the discovery of a research topic, the next section offers additional sources where ideas about research topics are plentiful. Keep in mind that these ideas or approaches are not mutually exclusive, but rather several approaches can be used simultaneously to develop a research topic. We begin by considering published research.

Published Research

Published criminal justice and criminology research is a valuable resource for identifying topics of interest. A productive approach using extant research is to examine the titles of recently published articles. Consider, for example, some titles found in volume 33, issue number 2, of *Justice Quarterly*, published in 2016:

1. Wooldredge, J., & Steiner, B. Police enforcement of domestic violence laws: Supervisory control or officer prerogatives?

2. Fox, K., Nobles, M., & Fisher, B. A multi-theoretical framework to assess gendered stalking victimization: The utility of self-control, social learning, and control balance theories.

3. Stupi, E., Chiricos, T., & Gertz, M. Perceived criminal threat from undocumented immigrants: Antecedents and consequences for policy preferences.

Research topic: Subject about which one is intellectually curious and wishes to investigate to develop new knowledge.

An examination of these titles provides several potential research topics, including police enforcement, domestic violence, and gendered stalking. From reading these titles, you may realize you have an interest in police enforcement, the characteristics of domestic violence, or the prevalence of gendered stalking.

Another excellent place to search in journal articles is in the concluding sections of published articles. It is standard practice for a journal article to identify suggested topics for future research. Reading what published authors note is needed for future research is another way to identify a topic of interest.

In addition to examining titles and the recommended future research in published articles, you can read journal articles in their entirety. It is simply the case, *and this cannot be stated enough*, that the more you know about existing research on a topic, the more you will recognize what is *not* known about that topic. It may seem that there remains no stone unturned in the world of criminal justice and criminology research, but that is far from the truth. There is much that remains unknown and much knowledge that can be enhanced. When consulting journal articles in the literature, pay special attention to the literature review where gaps in knowledge on a topic are generally explicitly identified. It may be that some identified gap is something of interest to you. This is exactly how the idea for the research on disadvantaged male youth and police relations conducted by Rod Brunson, another one of our featured researchers, was developed. In reading the literature, Brunson identified a lack of comparisons of youth and police relations between Black and White disadvantaged males. This made it challenging to know whether police youth interactions were a result of the disadvantaged neighborhoods or the race of the youth. It turns out that finding a high-crime, disadvantaged, predominantly White neighborhood was challenging, and as a result, the existing work focused primarily on Black neighborhoods (Brunson & Weitzer, 2009). Brunson and his colleague recognized that without the comparison between Blacks and Whites living in similarly disadvantaged neighborhoods, it was not possible to isolate whether poor police relations were a result of the high-crime in an area (disadvantaged neighborhoods) or the race of the youth living in the neighborhoods. Seeing this gap in criminologists' understanding allowed Brunson and his collaborator, Ronald Weitzer, to compare experiences and perceptions across neighborhoods. In doing so, they found evidence that the key characteristic associated with the quality of police relations was race and not the crime rates of the disadvantaged neighborhoods. A result of recognizing this gap in the literature led to this timely and interesting finding that enhances the body of police relations research.

Featured researcher James Carr conducted research to understand the relationship between officers who believe they are being treated fairly by their organization and how it affects their perceptions on the communities they serve (Carr & Maxwell 2018). Carr likens it to whether "trickle-down trust" exists among officers. The idea to study this relationship began with a conversation with a mentor, Dr. Joe Hamm. Hamm was putting together a public's trust in police project, and Carr was assisting. While assisting, it occurred to Carr that few if any had looked at this relationship in the opposite direction. That is, there is an important body of research focused on the public's trust in police, yet there is scant attention to whether public trust in police affects police trust in the public.

Obvious gaps in the literature also led to Zaykowski's (2014) research of victim reporting of violence to the police. Zaykowski had long been interested in better understanding crime-reporting behavior and other forms of help-seeking among victims. She recognized that in

this literature, the research focus was mainly on female victims, specifically on sexual and relationship violence. She felt it important to expand knowledge regarding victim reporting to include male victims as well as other types of crime experienced by females (beyond sexual and relationship violence). In these ways, Zaykowski was able to add knowledge to a criminologist's understanding about help-seeking for male and female victims and for a broader range of crimes.

Featured researcher Elizabeth Groff's knowledge from her work at the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and her interest in applied research gave rise to her research topic about whether providing timely information about burglary risk reduced subsequent burglary (Groff & Taniguchi, 2019). In addition, her reading of the existing literature, which identified gaps in the literature, prompted her interest in this topic. She found evaluation research on this topic at the neighborhood level, but no one had examined this topic at the individual level. Groff developed this research topic that was born from experience working at NIJ and knowing gaps in the literature. These are just a few ways in which existing research can offer a gold mine of ideas for identifying a research topic.

Data

Available data are an excellent resource for identifying research topics. What are data? Data are[1] pieces of information or evidence that can take a variety of forms such as numbers, words, observations, measurements, illustrations, recordings, and descriptions. Some data sets have a **data codebook** that identifies every characteristic or variable available in the data and how it is measured. For example, a codebook may have a variable or characteristics named "School_Year" that is measured using six categories: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, other, and unknown. Codebooks often have hundreds or thousands of variables found in the data set. For example, in the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), a major source of crime victimization data in the U.S. data codebook, you can find an enormous assortment of characteristics related to criminal property and personal victimizations including data about the victim, offender, and incident. In the NCVS codebook, you can learn that data on weapons used, injuries sustained, police reporting, offender drug/alcohol use, and hundreds of other topics are available. You might find multiple codebooks for the same data for different years that reflect changes in data collected. In the case of the NCVS, new topics of interest have been added over time. In 2003, a variable designed to gather data about the victim's perception of whether their victimization was a result of a hate crime was added. In June 2005, a variable used to gather data was added about whether the victim of a crime was pregnant at the time of the incident. In June 2008, new variables designed to gather data on whether victims felt distress, worry, anger, violation, and so on were added. Any of these variables may prompt the recognition of a topic of interest.

In some cases, examining a codebook prompts research ideas because of what is *not found*. Zaykowski noted that as a graduate student reading through the NCVS codebook, she was frustrated by the lack of variables available about victim behavior. In particular, she was

Data codebook:
Collection of all data gathered by a particular data set. Many criminal justice and criminology data codebooks are available online at no charge.

interested in victim drinking or drug use at the time of the victimization. Although questions on this topic are asked with regard to the offender in the NCVS, they are not asked about the victim. This prompted Zaykowski to seek other data sets as well as to consider gathering her own data on this research topic.

Many people fail to recognize that they are surrounded by data. Data take on many forms, including words, actions, interactions, speech, text, and numbers. That was the case for the youth and police relations research conducted by Brunson. Brunson recognized he had access to young African American males in a high-crime, disadvantaged neighborhood as well as to young Whites in a similarly disadvantaged place. Being able to interview these individuals to collect data on their experiences offered a key opportunity to conduct research that adds to our collective knowledge. The access and the trust Brunson established with the neighborhood youth in multiple neighborhoods over time allowed him to undertake this important study.

Theory

Criminal justice and criminological theories are sources of potential research topics. A theory comprises statements that explain a phenomenon. Theory is an explanation about how things work. Many argue that theory and research go hand in hand, and one is not of value without the other. For example, Cao (2004, p. 9) states that "[o]bservation without theory is chaotic and wasteful, while a theory without the support of observation is speculative." To some, theory is the starting point of the traditional research model, and that theory guides the entire research process. Conducting research using this model is respected, but there are practical reasons that nontheory testing research is conducted. For instance, some theories are so vague as to be difficult to confirm or disconfirm using research. In some cases, theories include elements for which there are simply no data available (or gathering those data is not feasible). In addition, the purpose of some research is to build theory versus to be guided by established theory.

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Many people falsely believe that data comes in the form of numbers only. The truth is that data are everywhere you look. For Rod Brunson, gathering information from individuals in an African American Barber Shop in St. Louis—a type of data—formed the basis for multiple research publications. Yes, interviewing people in their natural settings doing fun things can be research and provide valuable data. Where around you do you see data?

Valuable research has been conducted outside of the pure theory testing approach. In fact, none of our case study researchers engage primarily in theory testing. Their understanding of criminal justice and criminology is informed by theoretical perspectives, but each researcher describes themselves as a more applied and practical researcher. As Brunson notes, "It is important that scholars be well versed in theory. However, I don't think that theory—or lack thereof—should restrict intellectual pursuits. Theory should be used as a framework and guide and not discourage further exploration of ideas." Theory and research are never fully divorced, however. Research that is not focused on theory testing is used to develop

or enhance extant theory. Similarly, theory testing has yielded understanding that guides additional research.

Whether you are interested in traditional theory testing or other types of research, understanding theory leads to ideas about research topics. For example, routine activity theory identifies three necessary, but not sufficient, components for crime to occur: lack of a capable guardian, a motivated offender, and a suitable target (see Figure 2.2). Although you may not test this theory directly, understanding the theory may lead you to ask, "What makes a guardian capable?" This may lead to a fruitful line of inquiry on this topic that intrigues you.

Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

In some cases, an organization will advertise the need for research on a specified topic. These types of requests frequently come in the form of a **request for proposals (RFP)**. Requests for proposals are formal statements asking for research proposals on a particular topic. Qualified researchers, or teams of researchers, submit an in-depth proposal for conducting research on a topic. The proposals are reviewed by experts, and none, one, or several of the proposals are funded. The federal government as well as state and local governments regularly publish requests for proposals. Carlos Cuevas, another of our featured researchers, and his colleagues (Sabina, Cuevas, & Cotignola-Pickens, 2016) were able to secure a grant to fund the data collection that led to their study on Latino teen dating violence in this way. Although the RFP that had been posted requested research about teen dating violence only, Cuevas's team wanted to examine it, other types of violence, and the role that cultural influences play on victimization. Even though the topic of teen dating violence among Latinos was an area of interest to Cuevas prior to the government's RFP, the RFP offered Cuevas and his colleagues an opportunity to collect data that enabled them to conduct research that simply could not have happened without the grant funding. Together, an interest in the topic, familiarity with the fact that the literature had little information about experiences of Latinos, and the presence of an RFP led to a research topic and an opportunity to conduct research on this topic by Cuevas and his collaborators.
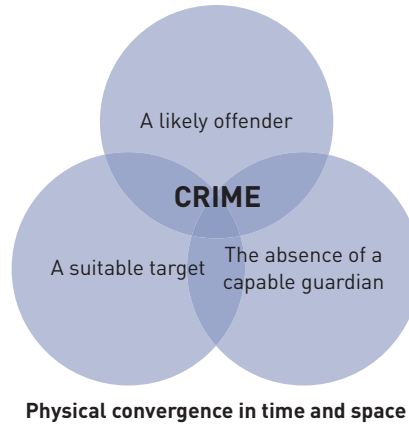
Request for proposals (RFP): Formal statement asking for research proposals on a particular topic.

Peruse RFPs posted online to see whether they prompt research topics of interest for you. It may be surprising to see the variety of topics across RFPs. To see all current RFPs originating from the federal government, go to www.grants.gov. On this page, you can select RFPs from specific departments such as the Department of Justice (DOJ). You can also go directly to a page of current RFPs posted by the DOJ at www.grants.gov/search-grants.html?agencyCode%3DUSDOJ. Aside from the federal government, private entities, local governments, nonprofits, and smaller organizations also post RFPs. For example, imagine yourself in your new role as an analyst at a research organization focused on criminal justice and criminology research. In this role, you would be constantly watching for RFPs to submit a proposal, and hopefully, you would be awarded grant funds to do research. In these cases, your research question is guided by the parameters of the RFP.

FIGURE 2.2 ◆ Routine Activity Theory

Theories offer explanations for how things work. Routine activity theory, developed by Cohen and Felson (1979), identifies three elements necessary, but not sufficient, to lead to macro changes in crime. In looking at this illustration, what types of research topics come to mind?

A likely offender

CRIME

A suitable target

The absence of a capable guardian

Physical convergence in time and space

Source: Cohen, L. E., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. *American Sociological Review, 44*, 588–608.

Personal Experiences

Personal experiences are another way to identify a research topic. Each of us has experienced or witnessed events that make us wonder about something. Perhaps you and a friend engaged in the same behavior, but your friend went to prison and you did not. This may lead to your interest in understanding variation in arrests or sentencing in the criminal justice system. Perhaps you have noticed that some people you know are given tickets for traffic violations when they are pulled over, yet others who engage in the same behavior get off with a warning. This experience may stimulate an interest in investigating variation in receiving traffic citations. An all-too-common experience is that a family member has experienced violence committed by an intimate partner. Given this, you might develop an interest in the ways that people cope with or respond to intimate partner violence or what leads some to become a perpetrator of intimate partner violence.

A personal experience led to featured researcher Mary Dodge's idea to conduct research on prostitution stings where women law enforcement agents act as decoys (Dodge, Starr-Gimeno, & Williams, 2005). Dodge spends a fair amount of time in the field as a researcher with members of police agencies. Prior to starting this research, Dodge was engaged in a ride-along with officers and detectives while they focused on cracking down on prostitution. Part of Dodge's time was spent in the hotel room where police would arrest "johns" entering with prostitutes they quickly learned where law enforcement officers acting as decoys. Although Dodge wanted to interview the men being arrested for that research, it became apparent that men in handcuffs who are arrested for soliciting prostitution are not very talkative. Imagine

Greg Miraglia served as a law enforcement officer before taking a role in higher education. Reading his book titled *Coming Out From Behind the Badge* offers many possible research topics.

you are a minister who was arrested in this situation. Would you want to talk about it? He certainly did not. It occurred to Dodge during this particular incident that no one had interviewed female police officers acting as crack-addicted prostitutes about their experiences as decoys. Dodge knew they would be willing to talk, and she did not think there was any research on this topic. This personal experience led to the development of the highlighted research we follow in this book.

Reading

Reading is an excellent source for finding interesting research topics. Consider *Coming Out From Behind the Badge*, which chronicles Greg Miraglia's (2007) experiences as a gay police officer. Given the hypermasculine culture of law enforcement, Miraglia recognized that coming out as a gay law enforcement officer would be ill-advised while he was an officer. Reading about Miraglia's experiences may lead to a curiosity about the presence of LGBTQ officers in law enforcement or about changes in acceptance of LGBTQ officers over time.

RESEARCH IN ACTION

MENTAL ILLNESS AND REVICTIMIZATION: A COMPARISON OF BLACK AND WHITE MEN

Although research has focused primarily on the violent offending of individuals with mental illness, recently attention has been given to the violent victimization of this group. In addition to examining victimization of persons with mental illness, attention is being given to the revictimization of these individuals. Research shows that persons with mental illness have a high risk of being victimized and that this increased risk may extend to revictimization as well. The researchers point to a single study that has investigated the revictimization of persons with mental illness that concluded that revictimization trajectories vary by diagnosis, symptomology, and alcohol abuse. What remains unknown is how other individual characteristics influence the chances of revictimization. Policastro et al. (2015) fill these gaps in our understanding by exploring differences, if any, in the trajectories of recurring victimization by victim's race. To do this, the research addresses the following research questions:

1. What types of within-person characteristics influence recurring victimization over time for each racial group?

2. Do the trajectories of recurring victimization of Black persons diagnosed with serious mental illness differ from the trajectories of White persons diagnosed with serious mental illness?

The sample used in this research by Policastro et al. (2015) was gathered via a stratified random sample of eligible patients discharged from in-patient psychiatric facilities at sites in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Worcester, Massachusetts; and Kansas City, Missouri. Those eligible for being drawn in sample were between the ages of 18 and 40, English-speaking, and White or African American. Participants had to be civil (not criminal) admissions to each facility and have a medical diagnosis of at least one of the following disorders: schizophrenia, depression, mania, schizophreniform disorder, schizoaffective disorder, dysthymia, brief reactive psychosis, delusional disorder, substance abuse/dependence, or personality disorder. The outcome variable of interest is whether the individual had been threatened, or had been victimized physically, with or without a weapon. The independent variables in this research include drug use, alcohol use, social network,

symptomology, use of violence, level of daily functioning, stress, homelessness, marital status, employment, socioeconomic status, and diagnosis.

After describing the sample, the researchers identified two major findings. First that the effect of alcohol abuse differed by victim's race. Alcohol abuse is associated with increased risk of revictimization for White persons with serious mental illness but not for Black persons with serious mental illness. The second major finding is that the trajectories of revictimization differed between Whites and Blacks. Specifically, the trajectory

of revictimization declines for Whites but remains flat for Blacks. This research indicates that the lived experiences of mental illness are different among the Black population compared with the White population.

The policy implications of this work point to the need for mental health care services for diverse populations and cultural sensitivity in their delivery. The results also suggest the need to ensure the accessibility of mental health treatment exists for underserved populations. With more mental health care providers in Black communities, the trajectory of revictimization may be changed.

Source: Policastro, C., Teasdale, B., & Daigle L. E. (2015). The recurring victimization of individuals with mental illness: A comparison of trajectories for two racial groups. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology, 32*, 675–693.

Or consider reading about the colorful Art Winstanley. Art was a burglar specializing in safe cracking in the 1960s. What makes his story unusual is that he was also a Denver police officer, and he operated with a ring of burglars, most of whom were also Denver police officers. As told in *Burglars in Blue*, Winstanley (2009) began burglarizing Denver area businesses as a rookie. He and the other burglars would case a business during the day, chatting up store owners who freely shared information such as where the safe was located. By taking advantage of trusting business owners and the lack of technology available at the time, Winstanley would return later

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Lectures and events where others speak offer a goldmine of research topics. Thinking back to the last lecture you attended, what topics come to mind?

to burglarize the business. His partner would wait in the patrol car to monitor the radio (portable radios did not exist). If a call came over the radio about a burglar alarm going off where Winstanley was safe cracking, his partner would radio that he and Winstanley would investigate. By doing this, no one else showed up who could apprehend these crafty burglars. Winstanley was eventually caught and sentenced to prison after a safe fell out of the trunk of his vehicle as he fled a scene. Reading about Winstanley and his co-conspirators may prompt you to learn more about police officers who commit crimes, officers who serve time in prison, or changes and improvements in technology in law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

Viewing

Viewing the evening news, documentaries, or movies, combined with curiosity, can lead to excellent research topics. In the previous chapter, there was a discussion about media depictions of violence against college students. These media portrayals focus primarily on sexual and relational violence as well as primarily on female victims. This may lead you to wonder about other types of violence and other types of college student victims. Alternatively, it would

not be unusual to be viewing a channel on the evening news that reports that each year more Whites are killed by police than are Blacks. Yet on another channel, you may see reports that Blacks are more likely to be killed by police than are Whites. These seemingly contradictory statements may lead to an interest in police killings, changes of police killings over time, or the role of race in the criminal justice system. Each of these, and countless others, would make an interesting research topic.

Listening

Listening to presentations, speakers, and even general conversation can lead to interesting research topics. You may be in a lecture where the speaker is presenting information on a general topic such as policing. What is conveyed in the lecture may prompt a specific interest in that topic. This is precisely how the idea to explore police impersonation was developed by Rennison and Dodge (2012). Rennison was teaching an Introduction to Criminal Justice class and had invited a police officer in to talk about his job. The officer shared traditional policing information but also informed students how they could distinguish a police impersonator from a legitimate officer. After hearing this, Rennison began wondering what the literature had to say about police impersonation. Ultimately, this curiosity led to a publication by Rennison and Dodge on this topic.

Casual conversations are also excellent sources of ideas. One of the best things about annual professional conferences of criminologists and criminal justice professionals is the research projects that originate from casual conversations. Zaykowski, in a video interview conducted for this book, related how she was discussing victimization research with a colleague who studies capital punishment. This exchange led to a discussion about any potential overlap that may exist between the two areas. What came of this was the topic of how the changing role of victim rights (i.e., variation in victim impact statements in court) may lead to disparity in capital punishment sentencing across trials. A new research topic was born.

Working on Research Projects With Professors

There are often formal and informal opportunities to work with professors engaged in research. Recall our introduction of our featured researchers in Chapter 1. Cuevas and Dodge both included students to assist on the research we are following in this text. Both of Dodge's collaborators were students (Starr-Gimeno and Williams), and Cuevas's collaborator Cotignola-Pickens was a student. This is a valuable opportunity and one you should jump at given the chance. At times there may be a posted request for student research assistants. Or it may be that a student contacts a professor and asks whether they can assist on a research project. Although these assistant positions may or may not be paid, and they may or may not allow you to earn course credits, the greater value is the research experience. In volunteering to assist with research, the student gains a deeper understanding of the process of research, and from that experience, they may discover several research topics. This is part of the way that Zaykowski (2014) developed a topic that focused on victim consciousness. As an undergraduate student, she was intrigued by a call for research assistants for a study of youth perceptions of the police. She had recently completed a service-learning class where she and others tutored

inner-city youth about the police and their communities. Eventually she reached out to a professor to discuss some research, and they began studying how youth interpret potentially violent encounters in the inner-city. Finally, working with a professor and recognizing a gap in the literature provided the impetus for Carr's interest in the relationship between officer's views of how their organization treats them and how it affects their own perceptions of the members of the community they serve.

Internet

The internet offers endless opportunities to discover a research topic of interest. If perusing the internet does not lead to a research topic of interest, you could simply search on the phrase "research paper topics in criminal justice" or "research paper topics in criminology," and thousands of possibilities will be returned. If you opt for this approach, remember to choose a topic you both care about and are curious about.

HOW TO IDENTIFY THE PURPOSE/ GOAL OF RESEARCH

Once a research topic is identified, you the researcher must work toward taking a very broad and general topic and narrowing it. The goal is to shape it into a feasible research question. Topics such as recidivism, sentencing, victimization, reentry, and policing are broad, and to construct a practical research question, narrowing is required. One step toward narrowing a broad research topic is to identify the **purpose of the research** you propose. The purpose of research can be thought of as the "goal" of the research. It is common to find in a research articles, "the purpose of this research is to . . ." or "the goal of this research is to . . ." or "the aim of this research is to . . ." This section identifies four major purposes or goals of research. Do you wish to *explore* something about a topic? *Describe* something about the topic? *Explain* something about the topic? *Evaluate* something about a topic? Or are several of these aims of interest?

Exploratory Research

Exploratory research is appropriate when little or nothing is known about a topic. The purpose or goal of exploratory research is to answer: "What," "How," or "Where" questions: "What is it?" "How is it done?" "Where is it?" Exploring or investigating a topic generates a deep understanding about that topic that was previously unknown. In addition to highlighting important features of the topic, exploratory research can identify characteristics that are unimportant and not worthy of future consideration. The prostitution research conducted by Dodge et al. (2005) in which female undercover police officers acted as decoys was exploratory in nature. Why? Because at the time of this research, almost nothing was known about how female police officers serving as prostitution decoys viewed their work. There was only a bit of speculation in the literature that this type of role was not positive for the women. Dodge's research would later demonstrate this speculation to be incorrect.

Purpose of the research: Overarching goal of the research. Broadly, there are four categories of purposes of research: exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, and evaluation.

Exploratory research: Research that addresses questions such as these: "What is it?" "How is it?" "Where is it?" This approach is used when little or nothing is known about a topic.

Brunson's work on youth and police relations was also exploratory in nature (Brunson & Weitzer, 2009). These researchers found that much of the existing knowledge on police relations was based on research that focused on adults and not on youth. Because youth are more likely to have involuntary and adversarial contact with police, Brunson, in a phone interview conducted for this book, told us that he felt at the time it was important to examine these interactions in particular. In addition, he said that a goal of this explanatory research was to understand if police and youth interactions and perceptions differed among Black and White youth living in similarly disadvantaged neighborhoods. This exploration into youth and police relations offered knowledge on how race and neighborhood context influence youthful males' orientations toward the police.

Descriptive Research

Descriptive research describes a topic. A researcher may want to describe something such as the extent of victimization or offending among a particular population. Like exploratory research, descriptive research seeks to answer questions such as these: "What is it?" "What are the characteristics of it?" "What does it look like?" Unlike exploratory research, descriptive research is more narrowly focused. This narrower focus on the topic is often possible because of knowledge gained from earlier exploratory research.

By using descriptive research, you can provide an even more detailed understanding about a topic of interest. This information is useful standing alone and can be informative for future explanatory research.

Explanatory Research

Explanatory research provides explanations about a topic and builds off of knowledge gained from exploratory and descriptive research to answer questions such as these: "Why is it?" "How is it?" "What is the effect of it?" "What causes it?" "What predicts it?" Explanatory research is used to identify what characteristics are related to a topic as well as what causes or influences a particular outcome of a topic of interest. In addition, through explanatory research, you may try to understand how to predict outcomes of topics of interest.

Zaykowski's (2014) highlighted research about accessing victim services is explanatory in nature. In this research, she wanted to understand the role that police reporting plays in influencing victim services. Better understanding this relationship will provide better understanding of ways to assist those who have been victimized. Similarly, Carr's research is exploratory because the topic he examined is underdeveloped (Carr & Maxwell, 2018). As Carr notes, researchers generally don't ask the question, "Do the police trust the public?" At least to date, there has not been much interest in that "trust" question. This is an important question to answer because as Carr notes, "If you're going to build a good police–public relationship, trust needs to go 'both ways.' How do you fix a problem if you don't ask the question? In this case, we need to ask the question 'Do the police trust the public?' if we are going to develop solutions to the problem of police–public relationships." Cuevas's research on Latino teen dating violence is also explanatory (as well as descriptive) in nature (Sabina et al., 2016). Specifically,

Descriptive research: Focused description of a topic that answers questions such as these: "What is it?" "What are the characteristics of it?" "What does it look like?" It is similar to exploratory research, but it is narrower given knowledge gained by exploratory research.

Explanatory research: Research that provides explanations about a topic by addressing question such as these: "Why is it?" "How is it?" "What is the effect of it?" "What causes it?" "What predicts it?"

Cuevas's research team wanted to gain an understanding of rates of violence, risk of violence, and what characteristics are associated with violence against Latino teens.

Evaluation Research

Evaluation research is used to generate knowledge; nevertheless, it has a different focus. Evaluation research is the systematic assessment of the need for, implementation of, or output of a program based on objective criteria. By using the data gathered in evaluation research, a researcher like you can make recommendations about whether a program is needed and offer evidence showing how one can improve, enhance, expand, or terminate a program. The assessment of a program can be conducted using any and all of the purpose described as well as research approaches and types of data described in later chapters in this text.

Groff's research is evaluative (and experimental) in nature (Groff & Taniguchi, 2019). This experimental research took place in Baltimore County, Maryland, and Redlands, California. As residential burglaries came to the attention of the police, residents were assigned to either a treatment or control group. Treatment included the informing of residents living near the original burglary target that there is an increased burglary risk. Later, the treatment and control zones were compared for differences in the mean number of residential burglaries to understand if notification reduced subsequent burglaries. Findings from this work can inform prevention strategies associated with burglary in residential communities. Table 2.1 illustrates the types of research, purposes of research, and questions answered in one place.

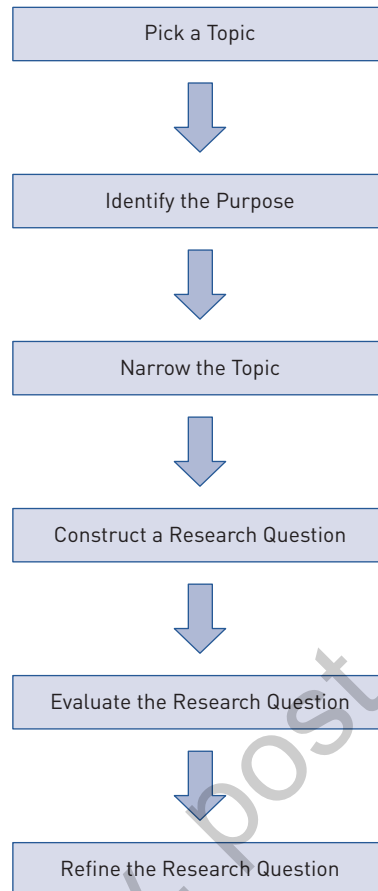# GATHERING MORE INFORMATION AND REFINING THE TOPIC

At this point, you should have an idea or topic about which you wish to explore, describe, explain, or evaluate. What is needed now is additional narrowing or focusing of the topic. For example, perhaps you are interested in studying the topic of *sentencing*. Specifically, you wish to *describe sentencing*. Describing sentencing is still a broad goal because subsumed under the heading of "describing sentencing" could be research that describes the history of it, important people who have changed the way sentencing is done, changes in sentencing over time, trends in sentencing, cross-national difference in sentences, race and gender in sentencing, and so on. Clearly, there is a need to continue to narrow the focus of this proposed research.

Narrowing or focusing the topic requires you to gather more information about the topic and purpose selected. This can be done in many ways, including the methods described earlier, to identify the topic initially. You can search on the broad topic and purpose "What is sentencing?" to focus your future research. You can discuss the broad topic and purpose with others. You can read more about this general topic and purpose. You can simply sit and ponder what it is about the topic and purpose that is of greatest interest to you. Is it to describe how gender influences sentencing? Maybe it is to describe how gender of the judge and the offender influences sentencing? Or perhaps you find you are interested in the role that race plays or income or in describing how the nature of the crime or the history of the offender is related to

Evaluation research: Applied systematic assessment of the need for, implementation of, or output of a program based on objective criteria. By using the data gathered in evaluation research, the researcher can improve, enhance, expand, or terminate a program. Evaluation research involves seven basic steps: identifying and engaging stakeholders, developing the research question, designing the methodology, gathering data/evidence, analyzing the data, developing findings and conclusions, justifying the recommendations, and communicating findings and recommendations.

TABLE 2.1 ●	Types, Purposes, and Questions Answered in Research				
Topic	**Purpose**	**Research Questions Answered**	**Where Occurs**	**Subject Aware of**	**Methodologies Used**
Exploratory research	Explore something	What is it?	Natural setting	Possibly	Qualitative research (Ch. 6)
		How is it done?	Office	No	Secondary data analysis (Ch. 9)
		Where is it?			
Descriptive research	Describe something	What is it?	Natural setting	Possibly	Qualitative research (Ch. 6)
		What are the characteristics of it?	Any location	Yes, voluntarily	Survey research (Ch. 7)
		What does it look like?	Office	No	Secondary data analysis (Ch. 9)
		*More narrowly focused than exploratory research	Office	No	GIS and crime mapping (Ch. 10)
Explanatory research	Explain something	Why is it?	Natural setting	Possibly	Qualitative research (Ch. 6)
		How is it?	Any location	Yes, voluntarily	Survey research (Ch. 7)
		What is the effect of it?	Any location	Yes, voluntarily	Experimental research (Ch. 8)
		What causes it?	Office	No	Secondary data analysis (Ch. 9)
		What predicts it?	Office	No	GIS and crime mapping (Ch. 10)
		Is a program needed?			
Evaluation research	Evaluate something	Does a program work?	Natural setting	Possibly	Qualitative research (Ch. 6)
		Who uses this program?	Any location	Yes, voluntarily	Survey research (Ch. 7)
		Is the program effective?	Any location	Yes, voluntarily	Experimental research (Ch. 8)
		Does the program lead to unintended	Office	No	Secondary data analysis (Ch. 9)
		Should the program be stopped?	Office	No	GIS and crime mapping (Ch. 10)
		How can we make the program better?			

FIGURE 2.3 ◆ Example Research Statement and Question

Pick a Topic

⬇

Identify the Purpose

⬇

Narrow the Topic

⬇

Construct a Research Question

⬇

Evaluate the Research Question

⬇

Refine the Research Question

sentencing. Or perhaps policies such as "three strikes" may be of interest. Whichever approach is used, the goal is to narrow the focus of the research so it can be stated in a clear, concise, and feasible manner.

HOW TO CONSTRUCT THE RESEARCH QUESTION

You now have the information needed to state the purpose of your research as well to develop the focused research question that will guide your research. Now you need to construct a formal research statement or research question that identifies the purpose and the narrowed topic. For example, consider the sequence illustrated in Figure 2.3 regarding the sentencing example:

The purpose of this research is to describe sentencing. In particular, this aim of the research is to describe sentencing with an emphasis on the demographics of the offender. To accomplish this, the following research question serves as a guide: "How does sentencing vary in terms of the demographics of the offender?"

These sentences offer the purpose of the research (description), the primary topic of interest (sentencing), and the more focused topic of interest (demographics and sentencing). You should be able to see how these statements, culminating in the research question, offer boundaries, are clear, and will guide the remainder of the research endeavor.

It is important to recognize that the language used in describing the purpose of research is not highly rigid. For example, in consulting journal articles, you may not find sentences such as "The purpose of this research is to describe, or explore or explain . . ." Rather, researchers will identify their purpose using synonyms such as determine, investigate, effect, influence, examine, ascertain, identify, and so on. When reviewing the literature, you must understand the greater context of the purpose by reading more than a single statement.

Why Have a Research Question?

By now, the reason for having a research question should be evident. A research question is the impetus behind research, and it guides every step in the research endeavor. As Groff states, "A research question puts a boundary around what you are doing. It's like having a recipe to make a specific dish." Research questions guide us. Based on what you have read in this book so far, it should be clear to you that the research question will drive all decisions about the design of the research, the way the data will be collected, and how those data will be analyzed as well. The research question establishes boundaries for, and focuses, the proposed research.

Evaluating the Research Question to Avoid Common Pitfalls

Once you have identified a research question (or questions), it is important to evaluate the research question to ensure it is practical and useful. It is not unusual to have to adjust or modify a research question early on in the research process, especially when you conduct your literature review (explored in Chapter 3). This section offers some ways to begin to evaluate the practicality and usefulness of a research question. Do not be alarmed if you find you must circle back and refine your purposes and research question given newly learned information. That is the norm. The following section identifies ways to evaluate your research question.

Is it a question, or does it imply a question? It may seem trite, but it is important that a research question be a question or at least be a statement that implies a question. By implying a question, a statement must contain a verb such as *examine*, *explain*, *investigate*, or *describe*. A statement that does not imply a question cannot drive research. In research, the researchers pose a question and answer it. Consider the differences between these sentences:

- Does a victim's gender influence reporting violence to the police?

- Men report violence more than women.

The question, "Does a victim's gender influence reporting violence to the police?" asks something that allows a researcher to gather data, analyze it, and answer a question. The statement "Men report violence more than women" does not imply a question that can be investigated. It is a statement and a conclusion. There is nothing to study about this. This statement could be changed to the question "Is the likelihood of reporting to the police different for male and female victims of violence?" That is a question that can be explored. Be certain that your research question is a question or, at a minimum, that it is a statement that clearly implies a question.

Is it feasible? Answering a research question must be feasible. That is, as a researcher you must have the time, money, and other resources needed to conduct the research and answer the research question posed. Consider this example: What policies and programs are most valuable to assist homeless persons who were formerly incarcerated across the United States? Is answering this question feasible? Probably not. Why? Because it would be exceedingly difficult to identify the location of all homeless people who were formerly incarcerated in the United States. It would also be extremely resource intensive to gather data from them (or even a subset or sample of them). A researcher would need an army of assistants, the money to pay the assistants (and their expenses), and an enormous amount of time to gather the data needed to answer this question. Carr commented that researchers must know if subjects will cooperate or if they can actually obtain the data they need. Understanding the feasibility of a research question is imperative. If you do not have the resources, time, or information needed to undertake that research, the research question should be adjusted.

Is it interesting? Is the research question posed interesting? Will others be interested in the research, conclusions, and knowledge gained by answering it? Although there is no way to measure definitively whether a topic is "interesting," and not everyone will find every research question or topic interesting (think back to the criticism regarding Brunson's interest in youth and police relations), you should take the time to ponder this question. At a minimum, the researcher should believe the research question posed is interesting. If the researcher does not believe it is an interesting research question, it is going to be a long and painful research endeavor. Also, if you do not find the research question interesting, what makes you think anyone else will? Consider the following research question as an example. Is it interesting?

What fabric is used for patrol officer uniforms?

At least on face value, this research question and the suggested descriptive research is not interesting, and answering it would not increase meaningful knowledge about policing or about uniforms. It might be better to consider other topics and purposes and then proceed.

Does it increase knowledge? The entire purpose of conducting research is to increase empirical knowledge and understanding about a topic. If a research question does not increase knowledge, then why conduct it? Why waste the resources needed to engage in research if it adds nothing to our existing understanding and knowledge about a topic? Consider the following research question:

Are girls and women, or are boys and men, more likely to be victims of rape in the United States?

Although understanding the role of sex in sexual victimization risk is valuable, there already exist volumes of research that have addressed this question and clearly established that girls and women, compared to boys and men, have a greater risk of being raped in the United States. Conducting research based on this research question today would likely lead to no *new* knowledge. As such, it is not advisable.

Is it too broad? It is important to craft a research question that is not overly broad. An excessively broad research question will be challenging, time-consuming, and possibly impossible to answer. Consider the following research question:

> What are the differences in economic, demographic, psychological, and social predictors of becoming a patrol officer, detective, sergeant, sheriff, federal agent, or judge compared to those entering noncriminal justice professions?

This research question is far too broad. In fact, you could take this single question and parse it into dozens of possibly useful and interesting questions. Groff identifies this as a common mistake made by beginning researchers. She warns that new researchers must ensure the question they develop must be testable. Overly broad questions lack feasibility and are ill advised to pursue.

Is it too narrow? It is also important to craft a research question that is not too narrow. Research questions that are too narrow tend to be uninteresting, and generally, they fail to add knowledge on a topic of interest. Consider the following research questions:

> What are the motivations for working for a small prisoner reentry nonprofit in the metro Denver area during 2016?

> How many people graduated in Texas in 2014 with a PhD in criminology?

With regard to the first question, it is difficult to imagine how answering this question would be of interest or add to any particular knowledge base. A researcher could broaden the question by removing the size of the nonprofit and the locale to get "What are the motivations for working for prisoner reentry programs?"

The second question is astonishingly narrow (and boring). Answering this would take little more than a Google search or a peek in the *Statistical Abstracts.* There are no data to be gathered and no methodology to be considered. This sort of question is not suitable for research. Research questions that are too narrow must be broadened.

Research Questions From Our Case Studies

Let's consider some purposes and research questions found in the literature from our featured researchers. In Carr and Maxwell's research (Carr & Maxwell, 2018), the goal was to explore how trust affects officers. In particular, the researchers wished to explain how police perceptions of their own policing organizations affect their views of the public, specifically the police officers' trust of people in areas they patrol. By investigating this research question, Carr and

colleague moved our understanding of trust among police and how it affects their views of those they patrol forward.

Brunson and Weitzer (2009) published descriptive research focused on accounts of police relations with young White and Black males in St. Louis, Missouri, from the young males' perspectives. The purpose of this research is clearly indicated by the authors' statements that "[t]his article examines the accounts of young Black and White males who reside in one of three disadvantaged St. Louis, Missouri, neighborhoods—one predominantly Black, one predominantly White, and the other racially mixed."

© Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

Brunson's research frequently focuses on the experiences and views of young African Americans regarding police relations. What are some interesting research questions on this topic you can pose?

Although there is no explicitly stated research question, the implied question is: "How do young Black and White males describe police relations across disadvantaged neighborhoods?" Brunson has long studied the topic of police relations with young males in disadvantaged communities. Given recent events in the United States, the public is more aware of the importance of this research topic and research questions.

Zaykowski's (2014) research is based on the knowledge that victims' access to and use of services is poor. Her research seeks to understand why that is. This explanatory work is clearly outlined in her purpose statement: "The present study examined factors associated with victim service use including reporting to the police, the victim's demographic characteristics . . . the victim's relationship to the offender, and the victim's mental and physical distress" (p. 365).

Like many, Zaykowski opted to use a statement versus a research question to note her intentions. Although a research question was not presented, the question that guided her research, "What factors are related to victim service use?" is implied given the verb *examined*. This research is interesting, feasible, and of great importance because it offers knowledge about what facilitates or hinders victim access the services they require.

Groff's research (Groff & Taniguchi, 2019) is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of alerting residents living in homes near one that had just been burglarized of an increased burglary risk. In other words, she was focused on near-repeat (NR) burglary. Criminology literature supports the notion of repeat victimization in that persons and places that are victims of crime are at greater risk of a repeat victimization. Similarly, victimization risk is greater for nearby targets. So, locations near a place that sustained a property victimization are also at elevated risk. Groff noted the literature had not paid much attention to NR burglary. In fact, her review of the literature uncovered only one study that focused on NR burglary using neighborhoods. Further, there has been no research evaluating the efficacy of NR interventions in U.S. jurisdictions. Her goal then is to answer three specific research questions:

RQ1 Does providing crime prevention material quickly after a burglary reduce the number of burglaries that occur in the near-repeat high-risk zone over the near-repeat high-risk period and beyond?

RQ2 What impact does notification of increased risk have on actions taken by residents and their perception of safety?

RQ3 What are the impacts of participating in the study on treatment providers?

These questions guide the rest of her research endeavor and adds to the literature in that it evaluates an unexamined approach to burglary prevention.

The work by Cuevas and colleagues (Sabina et al., 2016) focused on Latino teen dating violence was guided by four stated goals, which can be phrased as these questions:

RQ1 What are the rates of dating violence by victim gender?

RQ2 What is the risk of experiencing dating violence over time?

RQ3 Is dating violence victimization associated with other forms of victimization?

RQ4 What cultural factors (e.g., immigrant status and familial support) are associated with dating violence over time?

Although the goals of their research were not posed in the form of questions in the original text, the implied research questions are clear and serve to guide the researchers as they engage in this important work. The strength of these research questions, and the care put into crafting excellent research questions, pays off in the rest of the research endeavor. Having a solid foundation to work from and be guided by matters. Your research is only as strong as the weakest part of it. For that reason, you want to ensure you have developed a strong and excellent research question.

COMMON PITFALLS WHEN DEVELOPING TOPICS, PURPOSES, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Each step of research is plagued with potential pitfalls to be avoided. Developing a topic, purpose, and research question is not different. Many of the pitfalls are identified in the chapter, but it is useful to offer these reminders. First, develop a research question that is feasible. Many beginning researchers develop research questions that would take years and years to conduct (not even taking into account the funds that would be needed to accomplish it). Critically assess your research question in terms of whether it is doable in the time you have available. Consulting with more experienced researchers is useful for this. Also, know that no matter how carefully you plan, the research will always take at least 1.5 times longer as a result of unexpected things such as your institutional review board (IRB) being backed up, your proposed respondents being challenging to find, and other assorted surprises. None of these are project killers, but there is always something to slow a researcher down.

Also, a common pitfall seen in newer researchers is forgetting their research question. It is easy to end up down an interesting rabbit hole thinking about all kinds of fascinating and related things. You must stop and ask yourself daily, "Is this helping to answer my research question?" If it is not, stop what you are doing, and get back to the task at hand—answering the research question. Your research question provides the guardrails of your research. Some researchers even type out their research question and tape it to their computer monitor for a constant reminder of what their goal is.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DEVELOPING YOUR TOPIC, PURPOSE, AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Ethical considerations must remain at the forefront during the research process, including the selection of a research topic and development of a research question. As noted in Chapter 1, the Nuremberg Code from 1947 (Office of History, National Institutes of Health, n.d.) and Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) established the moral foundation that influences social science research conducted today. A research question, and the research that will be conducted to answer that question, must consider the three core principles coming from these historical documents. Individuals should be respected and treated as autonomous agents, researchers must focus on doing no harm (or at least minimizing it), and the possible benefits and harms must be distributed fairly among respondents (see Figure 2.4).

FIGURE 2.4   ◆   Balancing Respect for Persons, Beneficence, and Justice

Respect for Persons

Beneficence   Justice
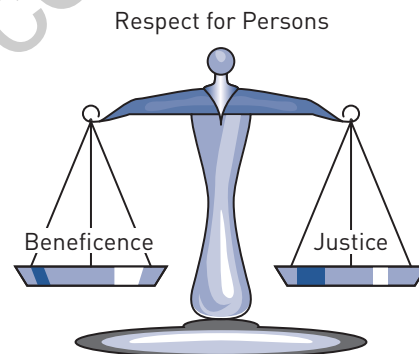
Respect for persons, beneficence, and justice have been required for many decades, yet unethical research has continued. What do you think it will take to finally stop unethical treatment of human subjects?

Even with this guidance in place, unethical research has continued. Consider the core principle of beneficence, which is to do no harm (or to minimize it to the extent possible) to study participants. Harm can take on a variety of forms including physical, psychological, legal, financial/economic, or social. One reason Milgram's teacher/learner study (conducted long after the Nuremberg Code was released) is considered unethical is that it inflicted psychological and emotional distress among the teachers participating in the experiment. In the journal article published on this study, Milgram (1963, p. 375) noted,

> Subjects were observed to sweat, tremble, stutter, bite their lips, groan, and dig their fingernails into their flesh. These were characteristic rather than exceptional responses to the experiment. One sign of tension was the regular occurrence of nervous laughing fits. Fourteen of the 40 subjects showed definite signs of nervous laughter and smiling. The laughter seemed entirely out of place, even bizarre. Full-blown, uncontrollable seizures were observed for 3 subjects. On one occasion, we observed a seizure so violently convulsive that it was necessary to call a halt to the experiment.

The initial Milgram experiments were conducted with observers hidden behind a one-way mirror. Observers remarked about the clear distress experienced by the teachers. One observer noted (Milgram, 1963, p. 377),

> I observed a mature and initially poised businessman enter the laboratory smiling and confident. Within 20 minutes he was reduced to a twitching, stuttering wreck, who was rapidly approaching a point of nervous collapse. He constantly pulled on his earlobe and twisted his hands. At one point he pushed his fist into his forehead and muttered: "Oh God. let's stop it." And yet he continued to respond to every word of the experimenter and obeyed to the end.

For years after the Milgram study, it was rumored that one of the "teachers" in the experiment committed suicide as a result of his participation in the study. It was believed that although this person had been told that no one had been hurt during a post-experiment debriefing, he was still distraught believing that he would cause pain to others, even when the learner begged him to stop. The urban legend suggests that because he was unable to forgive himself, he committed suicide. Although no evidence that this suicide occurred can be located, it does not take much imagination to believe it could occur. This type of harm must be considered when a researcher is developing a research question.

Today, the primary sources of guidance regarding behavioral science human subjects research originated in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). By building on the knowledge from earlier ethical regulations and rules, the HHS developed the **Federal Policy for the Protections of Human Subjects** in 1991. HHS regulations (HHS, 2009) include five subparts: A, B, C, D, and E. **Subpart A**, colloquially referred to as the Common Rule, outlines the fundamental procedures for conducting human subject research including the framework for IRBs and informed consent. **Subpart B** outlines requirements to ensure additional protections for pregnant women, neonates, and fetuses. **Subpart C** outlines additional protections for

Federal Policy for the Protections of Human Subjects: Set of regulations developed by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in 1991 that guides most contemporary research today. These regulations build on foundational documents such as the Nuremberg Code and the Belmont Report. When developed, this policy contained four Subparts: A (aka Common Rule), B, C, and D. In 2009, a fifth subpart (Subpart E) was added.

Subpart A: One subpart of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations that outlines the fundamental procedures for conducting human subject research including the framework for institutional review boards (IRBs) and informed consent. It is colloquially referred to as the Common Rule.

Subpart B: One subpart of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations that outlines additional protections for pregnant women, neonates, and fetuses proposed to participate in research.

Subpart C: One subpart of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations that outlines additional protections for prisoners proposed to participate in research.

prisoners, and **subpart D** focuses on additional protections for children. **Subpart E** was added in 2009 and focuses on the registration requirements of IRB committees.

The Contemporary Role of IRB

The **Common Rule**, or subpart A, outlines the basic policy of protection of human subjects (see Table 2.2). Much of this document is devoted to identifying the membership and responsibilities of IRB committees. IRB committees are required to be diverse across a variety of dimensions. First, committees must have diversity in terms of member demographics, areas of expertise, and affiliation with the institutions. No committee can consist solely of men, women, or individuals of the same profession. Scientists and nonscientists must be IRB members, and at least one IRB member cannot be affiliated with the institution. The unaffiliated party is the "community member."

The Common Rule also identifies research that must be reviewed by an IRB. First, it defines a **human subject** as "a living individual." This indicates that work on cadavers does not have to be reviewed under the Common Rule. In addition, it defines **research** as a systematic investigation or examination that will contribute to generalizable knowledge. An example of an activity that does not seek to contribute to generalizable knowledge is an interview with a victim's advocate about the types of programs available to victims of violence. This type of activity does not contribute to generalizable knowledge and does not have to be reviewed by IRB.

The IRB committee must review many elements of proposed research and has the authority to approve, require modifications, or disapprove any proposed research. The committee ensures that risks to subjects are minimized, risks are reasonable in relation to benefits, and the selection of research subjects is equitable. The committee also reviews to ensure the informed and voluntary consent of subjects is gained and documented. In addition, IRBs should make certain that consent is treated as an ongoing action. A person can withdraw consent at any time, and IRB committees ensure this is made clear. Consideration is given that data are maintained such that the privacy of subjects and confidentiality of data are ensured. All research protocols operating under the Common Rule are reviewed for these basic elements. Depending on the protocol, additional scrutiny may be given by the IRB.

To date, almost two dozen agencies and departments of the federal government, including the DOJ, have codified subpart A—the Common Rule—of the HHS regulations to protect against human subject abuses in research. The DOJ, a source of research funding for criminal justice and criminology research, is one of those adopting the Common Rule. Like many other federal agencies, however, the DOJ did not adopt subparts B, C, or D, which provide additional protections for three groups of vulnerable populations. Nonetheless, in choosing a research topic and developing a research question, it is important that a researcher take into account the use of vulnerable populations whether codified or not.

Vulnerable Populations

Subparts B, C, and D of the HHS regulations identify three **vulnerable populations** that receive an additional layer of review when proposed to participate in research. Vulnerable

Subpart D: One subpart of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations that outlines additional protections for children proposed to participate in research.

Subpart E: Most recently added subpart of Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations that outlines registration requirements of institutional review board (IRB) committees. This subpart was added in 2009.

Common Rule: Common name of Subpart A of the HHS regulations of 1991.

Human subject: According to the Common Rule, this refers to a living individual.

Research: According to the Common Rule, it refers to a systematic investigation or examination that will contribute to generalizable knowledge.

Vulnerable populations: Those who receive an additional layer of review when proposed to participate in research. According to HHS regulations, pregnant women, human fetuses and neonates, prisoners, and children are vulnerable populations. These populations are considered vulnerable in that they may be more vulnerable to coercion or undue influence.

TABLE 2.2 ⬡ The Common Rule		
45 CFR Part 46 Subpart A		
Adopted by 18 federal departments and agencies		
Department of Agriculture 7 CFR Part 1c	Department of Energy 10 CFR Part 745	National Aeronautics and Space Administration 14 CFR Part 1230
Department of Commerce 15 CFR Part 27	Consumer Product Safety Commission 16 CFR Part 1028	Agency for International Development 22 CFR Part 225
Department of Housing and Urban Development 24 CFR Part 60	Department of Justice 28 CFR Part 46	Department of Defense 32 CFR Part 219
Department of Education 34 CFR Part 97	Department of Veterans Affairs 38 CFR Part 16	Environmental Protection Agency 40 CFR Part 26
Department of Health and Human Services 45 CFR Part 46	National Science Foundation 45 CFR Part 690	Department of Transportation 49 CFR Part 11
Central Intelligence Agency*	Department of Homeland Security*	Social Security Administration*

*Denotes compliance with *all* subparts of 45 CFR part 46 but has not issued the Common Rule in regulations.

populations outlined in the HHS regulations are pregnant women, human fetuses and neonates, prisoners, and children. These populations are considered vulnerable in that they may be more susceptible to coercion or undue influence.

Pregnant Women, Human Fetuses, and Neonates

In general, review of research using pregnant women, fetuses, and neonates is designed to provide extra scrutiny to ensure no harm comes from the research. For example, for research involving pregnant women and **neonates** (i.e., newborns; a nonviable neonate refers to a newborn who, although living after delivery, is not viable) (HHS, 2009), the oversight outlined in the Common Rule is required; in addition, all 10 requirements must be met to allow for their participation in research. A few of the requirements that must be met are "(a) [w]here scientifically appropriate, preclinical studies, including studies on pregnant animals, and clinical studies, including studies on nonpregnant women, have been conducted and provide data for assessing potential risks to pregnant women and fetuses"; "(c) [a]ny risk is the least possible for achieving the results of the research"; "(h) No inducements, monetary or otherwise, will be offered to terminate a pregnancy"; "(i) [i]ndividuals engaged in the research will have no part in any decisions as to the timing, method, or procedures used to terminate a pregnancy"; and

Neonate: Newborn.

"(j) [i]ndividuals engaged in the research will have no part in determining the viability of a neonate" (HHS, 2009). Research involving neonates is required to prevent the termination of the heartbeat and respiration and must ensure that there is no added risk to the neonate participating in the research (among other requirements).
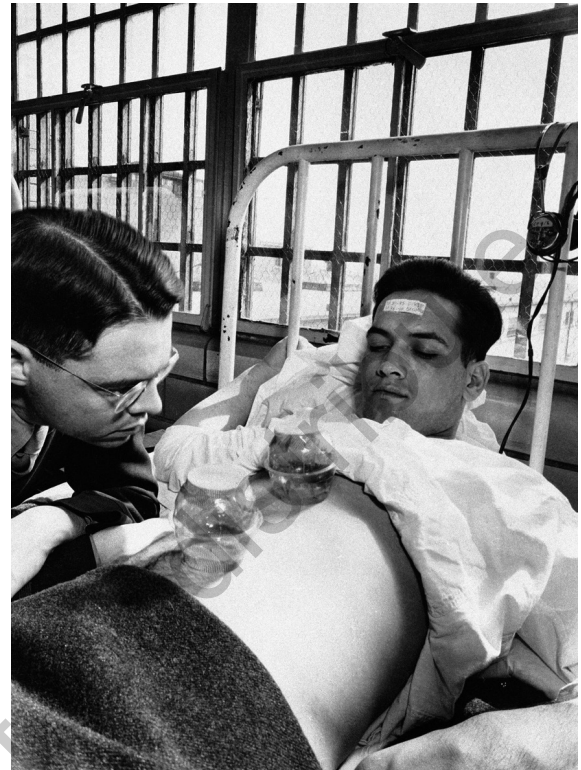
Prisoners

Prisoners are specifically identified as a vulnerable population in HHS's regulations given their confinement and inability to express free choice. A prisoner is defined by these regulations as the following (HHS, 2009, §46.303 Definitions, para. 3):

> [A]ny individual involuntarily confined or detained in a penal institution. The term is intended to encompass individuals sentenced to such an institution under a criminal or civil statute, individuals detained in other facilities by virtue of statutes or commitment procedures which provide alternatives to criminal prosecution or incarceration in a penal institution, and individuals detained pending arraignment, trial, or sentencing.

This image from the Holmesberg Prison skin experiments illustrates the unethical nature of this work. Prisoners were unable to provide informed voluntary consent given the way the study was conducted. One finding out of this research led to Retin A, which is widely used today to treat acne among other things. How might you have developed this same product without taking advantage of impoverished and imprisoned men?

Ex-prisoners are not considered a vulnerable population under subpart B. The additional scrutiny given research proposing to use prisoners results from a concern that because of incarceration, their ability to make a truly voluntary decision without coercion to participate as subjects in research is compromised. Additional requirements stipulate that the IRB committee include at least one prisoner or prisoner representative and that advantages gained by participating in the research are not of such a magnitude as to make difficult the weighing of risks to the advantages. In addition, the research proposed must provide assurances that parole boards will not take into account research participation when making decisions about parole. Prisoners must be informed prior to consent that their participation will not have any effect on the probability of parole.

To protect prisoners even more, contemporary research can involve only one of four categories of research related to prisoners. The first category requires that a study examine the possible causes, effects, and processes of incarceration as well as of criminal behavior. The second category of research involves investigations of prisons as institutions. Third, research focusing on conditions that particularly affect prisoners (e.g., diseases, victimization, and drug/alcohol abuse) is possible. And finally, research on policies or programs that would improve the health or well-being of prisoners is authorized.

Unfortunately, the additional layers of review have proven necessary given that prisoners have been used in unethical studies in the past. In Chapter 1, some of the experiments conducted

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Children, by definition, can only assent to participate in research. Why can't they consent? What characteristics are taken into account to ascertain if assent is necessary? Would you handle children in research differently? How?

on prisoners in concentration camps were described. In the United States, there have been a shameful number of unethical experiments on prisoners as well. "All I saw before me were acres of skin. It was like a farmer seeing a field for the first time." These are the words of Dr. Albert Kligman, who performed skin experiments on prisoners—primarily poorly educated people of color—confined at the Holmesburg Prison in Pennsylvania from 1951 to 1974. The prisoners referred to experimentation as perfume tests, but Kligman was conducting experiments using toothpaste, shampoos, eye drops, hair dye, detergents, mind-altering drugs, radioactive isotopes, dioxin (an exceedingly toxic compound), herpes, staphylococcus, and athlete's foot. Some prisoners had objects placed in incisions in their skins over time to determine the effects of these foreign bodies. This experimentation, lasting more than two decades, included injections and frequent painful biopsies. Kligman paid his subjects from $10 to $300 a day. Most prisoners at that time earned about 15 cents a day. Offering compensation of this magnitude made it questionable if prisoners' ability to voluntarily consent was honored. Given the poor information about the experiments the prisoners were given, and their circumstances as prisoners, it is clear no voluntary consent was given or even possible.

Children

Subpart D of the HHS regulations identifies children as a vulnerable population. Children are defined as persons younger than 18 years of age (local laws may vary and may take precedence over the HHS definition of children—for definitions related to this vulnerable population, see 45 CFR 46.402[a–e]; HHS, 2009). Reviews of research proposing to include children must meet all requirements in the Common Rule as well as others. For example, in general, research using children must offer no more than a minimal risk. If the risk is greater, it must be demonstrated that the research will lead to generalizable knowledge about a disorder or condition. Because they are younger than 18, children are not able to consent to participation in any research. Rather, children are frequently asked to **assent** or agree to participate in research that will likely benefit them, with the assurance that the child can comprehend and understand what it means to be a participant in research. Assent requirements can be waived as per 45 CFR 46.408(a) by IRB committees if a consideration of the child's age, maturity, and psychological state indicate assent is not possible and if the research offers direct benefit of health and well-being to the child. In addition to considering the need for a child's assent, an IRB committee will determine whether parental **permission** for participation is required. In most cases where parental consent is needed, permission from one parent or guardian is sufficient. In some situations, consent from both parents is required unless one parent has died, is incompetent, or is not available or there is not a second parent who has custody of the child.

Assent: Agreement by a child to participate in research that will likely benefit him or her. To gain assent, the child must be able to comprehend and understand what it means to be a participant in research.

Permission: Frequently, but not always, required by at least one parent when a child participates in research.

A repeated theme is that these additional requirements have proven necessary given unethical research using children in the past. Consider the research of Farfel and Chisolm (1991), researchers at Johns Hopkins University, with the approval of the university's IRB committee. This research, sponsored by HHS, compared the effectiveness of traditional lead abatement procedures compared with modified abatement procedures during the 1990s. Interior lead paint was outlawed in 1978 by Congress, yet years later, many dwellings still had this paint, including older inner-city rental housing in Baltimore, where low-income tenants lived and where this research took place. Lead paint is easily absorbed through the skin, and lead dust is especially problematic around doors and windows. Exposure to even a small amount results in permanent damage, especially to children less than 6 years of age. Lead toxicity has been associated with speech delays, aggressiveness, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, learning disabilities, and criminal offending.

The five groups of housing units used in the study by Farfel and Chisolm (1991) were identified by the Baltimore City Health Department, which had records of dwellings in which children suffering from lead toxicity resided. One group of dwellings had never had lead paint. A second group included dwellings in which all lead paint hazards had been removed. The three other groups of housing units were contaminated with lead paint but differed in terms of the approach taken to remove the lead. The first group was treated with traditional abatement techniques, including the scraping and repainting of peeling areas, as well as the addition of a doormat at the main entrance. The second group of homes was treated in the traditional way in addition to placing doormats at all entrances, installing easy-to-clean floor coverings, and covering collapsing walls with plasterboard. The third in the group of dwellings in abatement groups received the treatment the other groups received plus replacement of all windows.

Researchers encouraged owners of these housing units to rent to parents with children between the ages of 6 months and 4 years old because brain development is sensitive to lead exposure during this time. Parents living in these housing units were offered a financial incentive to participate in the study, which was portrayed as a study about how well different methods of renovation protected children from lead poisoning. Efforts were made to dissuade renters from leaving the units during the experiment.

During the 2-year experiment, testing of the presence of lead in the housing units and testing of blood lead levels in the children were taken periodically. Some children who moved into these units were exposed to dangerous levels of lead, and their blood tests showed enormous increases in their blood level. In others, lead toxicity was reduced but remained at unhealthy levels. Yet the experiment continued, and children continued being exposed to lead.

When the details of this experiment finally came to light, lawsuits were filed, and judgment was harsh. One judge compared this study to the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment as well as to the Nazi medical experiments. Others continue to maintain that there were no ethical lapses with this research and that some children in the study experienced decreases in their lead toxicity over the course of the study.

HHS regulations do not identify veterans as a vulnerable population, but the Veteran's Administration views them as potentially vulnerable. What make them potentially vulnerable? What other populations might be vulnerable in research settings? Why?

Potentially Vulnerable Populations

Although subparts B, C, and D of the HHS regulations specifically identify pregnant women, prisoners, and children as vulnerable populations, it is incumbent on the researcher to consider what other groups may be potentially vulnerable. Vulnerable populations include any population that requires additional consideration and augmented protections in research. Consider the gathering of data for the NCVS. Like many social surveys, its methodology considers potentially vulnerable populations given the nature of data gathered. The NCVS (2001) identifies vulnerable populations as pregnant women, prisoners, and children as well as "the elderly, minorities, economically or educationally disadvantaged persons, and other 'institutionalized' groups such as students recruited as research subjects by their teachers and employees recruited as research subjects by their employer/supervisor" (p. 40). For these groups, it is important to contemplate ethical considerations such as whether consent is informed and autonomous, research participation is free of coercion, and the language and presentation fit the needs of the particular population. What is considered a vulnerable population may differ depending on the topic and purpose of the research.

One **potentially vulnerable population** not identified in the NCVS documentation or HHS regulations are veterans. Although veterans are not a vulnerable population according to the HHS, the Veteran's Administration considers veterans as potentially vulnerable populations. The reasons stated for this are veterans' rigorous training to obey orders, willingness to sacrifice, as well as the potential for veterans to be suffering from post-traumatic stress and other disorders related to their status.

Given this, would it be ethical to conduct an investigation of suicide ideation among active military who are currently receiving help after an attempted suicide? This research was proposed by a graduate student who noted that this research could offer important information related to this topic including the role that demographics (e.g., age, income, race, ethnicity, and arm of the services) played in suicide ideation and attempted suicides. Would this type of research be wise? Ethical? Would asking these particular individuals to share their experiences offer information that was greater than the potential trauma it might invoke? In this real-world example, professors overseeing this student's work did not think it was an ethical line of inquiry for this population, and the student was encouraged to find another topic.

Potentially vulnerable populations: Any population that may be more vulnerable to coercion or undue influence. For example, the Veteran's Administration views veterans as a potentially vulnerable population. Depending on the research, a potentially vulnerable population may include students, employees, educationally disadvantaged people, minorities, or older persons.

Exempt research: That which does not have information about respondents, is publicly available, and has no more than minimal risk.

Exempt, Expedited, or Full Panel Review at the IRB

There are three types of research categories when submitting to IRB: exempt, expedited review, and full board review. **Exempt research** occurs when human participants conform to one of the categories from section 46.101(b) of 45 CFR 46 (HHS, 2009). This includes research using existing data, documents, or records in which the data offer no means to identify subjects. Work with the NCVS, like that conducted by Zaykowski (2014) in her victim services research, is an

example of exempt research. **Expedited review** of research does not mean that an IRB review will be conducted quickly. Rather, it means that the review of the research protocol will be done by the IRB chair and possible other committee members. Expedited review can be used only when the research involves no more than minimal risk, does not include vulnerable populations, and is not using deception. **Full board review** is required in all other types of research. In this instance, the research protocol is reviewed and discussed by the full IRB committee. Important elements considered such as informed consent is voted on by the full committee.

Much of the research featured in this text went to full board review, and some required the additional scrutiny required given Subpart D regulations. Brunson, and Cuevas and their colleagues gathered data from youth that required additional scrutiny. The researchers report generally good experiences with IRB committees and approval. Many also note that others are frequently negative about IRB but that in general, a negative interaction involves a lack of preparation, organization, clarity, or thoroughness on the part of the researcher. The challenges described generally focused on individual IRB committees (which can vary institution to institution). An often-repeated challenge was the lack of consistency across IRB protocol consideration as well as a lack of institutional memory. A researcher can submit nearly identical protocols at two points in time resulting in two different experiences. This may be a result of changing committee members or of a lack of expertise on a committee (e.g., lack of a researcher with expertise in gathering and using qualitative data, lack of familiarity of a particular methodology, and lack familiarity with the area of interest). With regard to working with juveniles, some researchers note that some committees make it easier to access delinquent or at-risk juveniles but make accessing so-called good kids challenging.

Training in Protecting Human Subjects

If you are conducting research that will be reviewed by an IRB committee, your institution will likely require you to take training on the topic of human subjects research. Please note that you do not have to wait until you are submitting proposed research to the IRB to get trained. Most universities offer free training to faculty, staff, and students. In addition, anyone can access free human subjects online training through the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)**, a federal collection of 27 institutes and centers engaged in biomedical research. Although the NIH training focuses primarily on medical and health research, this training is applicable to research in the social sciences given the similarities of research in the areas. For example, victimization, injury, and other topics of interest to criminologists and criminal justice professionals are also of great interest to health scientists. This overlap is further demonstrated because this training is based on the HHS regulations described earlier (HHS, 2009). To access the English version of this free training, go here: https://phrp.nihtraining .com/users/login.php. The Spanish version can be accessed here: https://pphi.nihtraining .com/users/login.php. To take this free course, a brief registration is required. The entire course is estimated to take 3 hours to complete and will cover some of the topics presented in this text. You can save work and return later, so it is not necessary to carve out a 3-hour block of time. Once the course is completed, a certificate is made available online to demonstrate your successful training in protecting human research subjects!

Expedited review: Review by the IRB committee chair (and perhaps one or two other members). This is not necessarily a fast review but one that does not require the full board.

Full board review: All research that is not exempt or expedited and requires the review of the full IRB.

National Institutes of Health (NIH): Federal collection of 27 institutes and centers engaged in biomedical research. NIH offers free online training in human subjects research.

IRB EXPERT—SHARON DEVINE, JD, PhD

Sharon Devine, PhD, is a research assistant professor and chair of the Exempt/Expedited Panel and chair of the Social and Behavioral Panel for the Colorado Multiple Institutional Review Board (COMIRB) at the University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus. Her research focuses on research ethics and evaluation of public health projects. She is currently examining the evaluations of public health projects, specifically training professionals engaged in clinical and behavioral interventions around HIV and STDs (funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), facilitating integration of family planning into STD clinics (funded by the Office of Population Affairs), and reducing teen pregnancy (funded by the Office of Adolescent Health).

Devine was a successful practicing attorney for years when she made the decision to pursue a master's degree in anthropology. During her master's coursework, a professor identified her research skills and encouraged her to continue for a PhD, noting she would want to conduct her own research. Recognizing this opportunity, Devine closed her law practice and returned to school full time to pursue a PhD. Her fondness for research grew when she recognized that she could create new knowledge and make actionable recommendation that would have a positive impact on society. In the course of seeking her PhD, a professor was looking for a student volunteer to sit on the university IRB, so she volunteered. Since then, she earned her PhD and continued her work on the university IRB committee. Eventually, she was asked to sit on the newly devised Social and Behavioral Panel. Prior protocols had to go through the medical school IRB, which created great difficulties for social science researchers. Although she never thought, "Hey I want to be on an IRB committee," the opportunity presented itself and has taken her on a great path. Today she oversees all protocols coming through the system. This offers her a unique perspective on research and ethics.

Devine notes that IRB is important for several reasons. First, it offers an independent review of research design and procedures to ensure everything is ethical for human subjects. It is important that all be treated with dignity and respect, and having an independent body consider proposed research enhances the chances to treat research subjects appropriately. Second, it forces a researcher to plan their research and to be able to articulate that research plan carefully. She comments on how she as a young researcher did not appreciate the need to think out the methodology in advance. The IRB review helps ensure this and, in doing so, is respectful of human subjects kind enough to participate in our research. Third, seeing how researchers have handled themselves in the past indicates the need for some type of oversight.

Yet, Devine recognizes several challenges researchers face when they engage with the IRB. First, she recognizes that that IRB can come across as nitpicky. All researchers must understand that not only is it the university's responsibility to protect human subjects, but it is its responsibility

to document that the reviews were conducted thoroughly. This care and consideration can come across to researchers as the IRB being difficult. Devine recognizes that some of the existing regulations are heavy handed for a fair amount of social science. She also would like to see the regulations simplified while still focusing on the risk to subjects. A second challenge she sees is that a committee can at times lose focus. It is not the committee's responsibility to say, "I'd do this research differently," but to identify whether the methods, design, and protections as proposed are adequate to protect subjects. And a final challenge she identifies is working with students and junior faculty who have not been properly mentored about how to submit an IRB protocol. Devine offers examples of problems frequently seen in submitted research protocols:

- Failure to include an appropriate level of detail in the submitted materials. It is not enough to say that you will conduct survey research. You must also submit the survey so that the IRB can review it and the documentation is obtained.

- Protocols that are tone-deaf or cavalier about the proposed research. The subjects are human and deserve respect. Do not infantilize respondents or treat them with a lack of dignity.

- Application documents that are internally inconsistent. If you note that you will interview 50 people in one area of the application, and 80 people in another area of the application, IRB approval will be delayed.

- Failure to complete the forms in full. You must fill in all blanks. Devine understands some questions asked on the applications are not clear, but the university is required to ask them. If a researcher does not understand the question, do not leave it blank. Rather, contact the IRB and ask what is needed.

- Failure to respond to prior comments. At times, a researcher is instructed to make particular changes or to provide additional information, but they do not do so. Detailed records are kept in IRB, and this oversight will be noted.

Devine notes that building knowledge via research demands a lot of thought and that makes it different from general opinion polls, marketing surveys, and so on. Building knowledge frequently requires the help of others (i.e., research participants), and we owe it to them to treat them properly and to conduct research that will be rigorous and valuable. IRB is one part of that process.

CHAPTER WRAP-UP

This chapter presents the steps you should take to identify a research topic and research purpose. By using these elements, the chapter discusses ways to focus this information into a clear, concise, and feasible research question. As demonstrated, many sources are available from which you can develop an area of interest. Easy methods to evaluate the research question were discussed. Examples from our case studies were used to illustrate the variation in how researchers used their intellectual curiosity to develop research questions. As was shown, ideas came from a variety of sources. Table 2.3 in this chapter offers a quick review of the featured researchers and research focusing on the topics in this chapter. You should become familiar with these journal articles because we will discuss them in detail throughout the book.

TABLE 2.3 ● Featured Research: Topics, Purposes, Research Questions, and IRB Approvals					
Researcher	**Topic**	**How Developed**	**Purpose**	**Research Question**	**IRB Approval**
Rod Brunson	Racial variation in youth and police relations in disadvantaged urban neighborhoods	Gap in literature	Exploratory	What are differences in views of police relations of Black and White youth based on where they reside: a Black disadvantaged neighborhood, a White disadvantaged neighborhood, or a racially mixed disadvantaged neighborhoods?	Full board with additional scrutiny, given the focus on youth
Carlos Cuevas	Teen dating violence rates among Latinos over time	RFP combined with knowledge of gaps in the literature	Explanatory and descriptive	(1) What are the rates of dating violence by victim gender? (2) What is the risk of experiencing dating violence over time? (3) Is dating violence victimization associated with other forms of victimization? (4) What cultural factors (e.g., immigrant status, familial support) are associated with dating violence over time?	Full board with additional scrutiny, given the focus on youth
Mary Dodge	Perspectives of female law enforcement officers acting as prostitutes in stings	Personal experience while on police ride-along	Exploratory	Explore how female police officers serving as prostitution decoys view this work	Expedited
James Carr	How do police officers' view of how their organization treats them affect how they perceive those they patrol?	Exploring trust of police in a way that has not been considered to date. This was prompted by working with a professor on another project focused on trust in police (vs. trust by police)	Explanatory	How do police perceptions of just processes and practices by their own organizations affect their trust in residents of the communities they patrol?	Expedited review prompted by Carr, who wanted the assurance of IRB—there were some questions about anonymity in his study and having IRB specialists work with him ensured this was addressed

Researcher	Topic	How Developed	Purpose	Research Question	IRB Approval
Elizabeth Groff	Burglary prevention by focusing on near-repeat burglary	Knowledge of the literature, including gaps in the literature	Evaluative and experimental research	(1) Does providing crime prevention material quickly after a burglary reduce the number of burglaries that occur in the near-repeat high-risk zone over the near-repeat high-risk period and beyond? (2) What impact does notification of increased risk have on actions taken by residents and their perception of safety? (3) What are the impacts of participating in the study on treatment providers?	Expedited
Heather Zaykowski	Male and female reporting/help-seeking behaviors across multiple types of violence	Gaps in literature	Explanatory	To examine factors associated with victim service use including reporting to the police, the victim's demographic characteristics, the victim's injury, offender's use of a weapon, the victim's relationship to the offender, and the victim's mental and physical distress	Exempt

Although we have discussed our cases studies throughout this chapter, it is useful to consider each case study article with regard to the topics presented in this chapter. As Table 2.3 demonstrates, each case study focused on a different topic that was developed in a variety of ways. Purposes varied, and the research questions each researcher used reflect this. Note that in some cases, researchers used more than one research question to guide the research. This is acceptable and fairly common. This table also shows that each approach required varying scrutiny from the IRB committee. The varying scrutiny not only was based on the topic and research conducted but also on variation in university requirements.

In addition, this chapter focused on common pitfalls associated with setting the stage for your research. A major one is losing sight of the role of the research question. Answering it is why you are conducting research. Ethical considerations when moving through these initial steps in the research process were also highlighted. Information provided highlighted

the influence of historical human subject ethical documents—the Nuremberg Code and the Belmont Report—on contemporary rules based on HHS regulations. Information on the subparts of the HHS regulations was also provided, bringing attention to vulnerable populations and the additional reviews such groups entail. Students were shown a place to take a free online human subjects research class, which will further hone their understanding of ethics in the research process. Sharon Devine, the chair of the Social and Behavioral Panel IRB committee at the University of Colorado Denver Social and Behavior Panel IRB, also discussed her role on this committee. As she indicated, IRB is a serious undertaking, and many people work hard to protect human subjects. In the next chapter, we review how research questions are used to guide and conduct a literature review. As will be seen, the literature review allows a researcher to polish and focus the research question even more. Once the literature review is completed, the planning of the nuts and bolts of the actual research begins.

APPLIED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Homework Applied Assignment:
Identifying a Purpose and Research Question

Find two peer-reviewed journal articles from major journals that interest you. Using these two articles, please write a paper providing the following information for each: clear statement of the purpose of this research (descriptive, explanatory, etc.?), clear statement of the research question, and basic summary of the research including the methodology used and research findings. What is your assessment of these findings? In addition, provide your assessment about any ethical issues this research may have encountered and the ways the researchers dealt with them. Be prepared to discuss what you found in class.

2. Group Work in Class Applied Assignment:
Developing and Assessing Research Questions

As a group, come up with three research questions. The first should be used to study something related to adolescent offenders. The second should be used to study something related to victims of sexual violence. And the final research question should be used to study something about incarcerated women. Be able to describe how you developed those research questions. What motivated you to narrow your topics to the ultimate research questions you developed? Evaluate each research question to ensure it is not too broad or too narrow, is interesting, and so on using the information in this text. Be able to identify the purpose of each research question (descriptive, explanatory, etc.?). Given these research questions, do you see any ethical issues you may have to address before conducting this research? What are they? Why are they important? What type of IRB approval would you need to conduct this research? Prepare a table like Table 2.3 with your three proposed pieces of research indicated by the research questions to share with the class. Be prepared to discuss what you found in class.

3. Internet Applied Assignment: Training in Human Subjects

Access the free online human subjects training offered by the NIH: https://phrp .nihtraining.com/users/login.php. Once you have successfully completed your training, you will be awarded an online completion certificate. Please print out and provide that certificate to your professor/instructor.

Key Words and Concepts

Find mobile-friendly eFlashcards of these key terms and definitions at:
https://edge.sagepub.com/rennison-research-methods-2e

Assent 64

Common Rule 61

Data codebook 42

Descriptive research 50

Evaluation research 51

Exempt research 66

Expedited review 67

Explanatory research 50

Exploratory research 49

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Wheel of science 38

Key Points

- A research topic is the general subject matter in which someone has an interest. Topics can come from a variety of places including the extant literature, data, theory, RFPs, the internet, and personal experiences.

- Purposes for research generally fall into four primary categories: exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, and evaluative. Any piece of research may have one, two, or more purposes.

- A research question guides the rest of the research process. Answering the research question is the goal of your research.

- Research questions should seek to increase knowledge and be feasible, not too broad, and not too narrow.

- Although important and influential, the Nuremberg Code and Belmont Report are considered historical documents in regard to human subjects research. Yet the intentions of these documents continue to influence today's research.

- The Federal Policy for the Protections of Human Subjects, developed by HHS in 1991, is an improvement on earlier attempts at stopping unethical research. Unlike earlier efforts, this policy ties compliance with funding.

- The Federal Policy for the Protections of Human Subjects contains five subparts: A (aka Common Rule), B, C, and D. Subpart E was added in 2009.

- Subpart A of the Federal Policy for the Protections of Human Subjects outlines the fundamental procedures for conducting human subject research including the framework for IRBs and informed consent. It is more commonly known as the Common Rule.

- Subpart B of the HHS regulations outlines additional protections for pregnant women, neonates, and fetuses; subpart C outlines additional protections for prisoners; and subpart D outlines additional protections for children proposed to participate in research. Subpart E focuses on registration requirements of IRB committees.

- Vulnerable populations are those that receive an additional layer of review when proposed to participate in research. Populations are considered vulnerable if they may be more susceptible to coercion or undue influence given their circumstances. According to HHS regulations, pregnant women, human fetuses and neonates, prisoners, and children are vulnerable populations. Researchers must be sensitive to other groups who are potentially vulnerable, such as veterans.

Review Questions

1. Where are some good sources to find a good research topic?

2. What purpose does exploratory research serve? When is the best time to use it?

3. What is the purpose of descriptive research, and how does it differ from exploratory research?

4. Explanatory research answers many questions. What are some of them, and how are they different from other research purposes?

5. How does evaluative research differ from the other purposes? When is it best used?

6. Why is having a research question important?

7. What makes a research question a good research question?

8. What advantages do the HHS regulations have over early documents such as the Nuremberg Code and the Belmont Report?

9. What were some of the impetuses of subparts B through D of the HHS regulations?

10. Who are considered vulnerable according to HHS? Why is considering vulnerable populations important?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. A student proposes the following research question for a class project: "What are the criminal backgrounds of older males entering the police academy in Cincinnati, OH?" If you were asked to provide feedback and evaluate this research question, what would you say?

2. A student proposes the following research question for a research project she wishes to conduct: "What influences explain whether children reveal they have been neglected, abused, or maltreated by their parent?" If you were asked to evaluate this proposed research, what feedback would you provide? What challenges do you foresee should this student go forward?

3. Research by Farfel and Chisolm in the 1990s investigated the effectiveness of a variety of lead abatement protocols. Some consider this research to be as unethical as the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment. Yet others argue that some of the children in the experiments experienced a decrease in lead toxicity. In your opinion, was this or was this not ethical research? Use the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice to justify your stance.

4. Subparts B through D of the HHS regulations identify several vulnerable populations. Do you believe other groups should be identified as vulnerable in additional subparts of the regulations? If so which groups would you specify and why? Do you believe that researchers will self-police and take into account potentially vulnerable populations? What evidence do you have of that?

5. Dodge hopes to conduct research on incarcerated female embezzlers. In particular, she would like to understand their motivations and compare them with motivations identified decades ago. What additional considerations will Dodge have to consider should she engage in this research? How might she demonstrate to the IRB that she has considered issues related to human subjects?

Note

1. The word *data* is typically considered to be plural in scientific writing; thus, the phrase "data are . . ." is correct.