

CJ 420: Criminal Justice Research Methods  
Group Research Paper, Spring 2010

***Assignment Overview***

Your assignment is to frame a question that relates to the criminal justice field and be of some public significance. In addition, you are expected to outline a process by which the question posed might be empirically answered. Your proposed study must be explanatory, deductive, and quantitative, and you should assume that there are no major funding or time limitations.

***Paper Guidelines***

These guidelines provide a brief outline of the parts of the paper as they should appear in the final paper. You should draw on more detailed information from outside readings and class discussions to supplement these instructions, and see below for further details, due dates, etc. With the exception of the “title and introduction,” I strongly recommend that you include the headings of each section below as headings for sections of your paper – this will help you ensure that you are not leaving something out.

*Title:*

- The title should capture the reader's attention and be informational – the reader can tell exactly what your paper is about from the title.
- The title should be brief
- The title should refer to the population of interest and to the variables studied
- Example: The Relationship Between Self-Concept and Employment Status Among Individuals with Epilepsy

*Abstract:*

- The abstract is a brief summary of the research
- Often stated in less than 150 words
- The abstract summarizes the purpose of the study, the methods used to conduct the research, and the results

*Introduction:*

- The introduction should include a sentence or two on what you are studying and explain why the issue is socially important and relevant to the criminal justice field.
- It should include a brief summary of how the study will be conducted, including the sample, method of data collection, and proposed analyses.
- The introduction should be brief, just one paragraph.

*Literature Review:*

- This part of your paper should be a summary of previous research on your topic.
  - What is known about the topic?
  - What is not known about the topic?
  - Establish the need for your research study
- You **MUST** use at least **FIFTEEN PEER-REVIEWED journal articles**.
- Make sure you cite everything properly!
- You **MUST** place the proper citations in a “Reference” or “Works Cited” page at the end of your paper.
  - Please see the APA Citation Guide on my website for help with this
- This should be approximately 10 pages long

Here are some things to keep in mind while writing your Literature Review:

- What is known about the subject?
- Are there any gaps in the knowledge of the subject?
- Have areas of further study been identified by other researchers that you may want to consider?
- Who are the significant research personalities in this area?
- Is there consensus about the topic?
- What aspects have generated significant debate on the topic?
- What methods or problems were identified by others studying in the field and how might they impact your research?
- What is the most productive methodology for your research based on the literature you have reviewed?
- What is the current status of research in this area?
- What sources of information or data were identified that might be useful to you?

*Research Question:*

- The research question should be phrased in the form of a question.
- It must be able to be answered by the methods that you propose.
- This should be about a paragraph

*Hypotheses:*

- Be sure to clearly state three concrete, testable hypotheses that are derived from your research question.
- Make sure you indicate what your dependent & independent variables are for each hypothesis in paragraph form.

*Methods:*

- This part of your paper should include:
  - Information about the sample
    - How you will select the sample you will be using in your research
    - Type of sample you are using and why
    - The procedures involved in selecting the sample including the population from which the sample is drawn
    - Your anticipated N and response rate
    - Address the impact your research could have on those participating in the study
      - How will you minimize the impact on the participants in your study?
    - How will you ensure the confidentiality of any information you collect from them?
  - Data collection methods
    - Which method will you use to collect data, and why?
    - The two most important things to keep in mind here are 1) adequacy and generalizability of the sample, and 2) feasibility.
  - Measurement
  - Proposed analyses
- Be sure to explain *why* you have made the choices you have in this section – for example, why is your method of data collection the most appropriate for your research question?
- Why have you selected the sample you have?
- Please also explain how you are going to avoid issues of external and internal validity.
- This part of the paper must explain in detail how you will measure your central concepts and any additional variables you propose to measure.

- If you are proposing to conduct a survey, you will need the actual survey questions and in-text explanations of those questions regarding why they are included.

**DO NOT reinvent the wheel** in this section of your paper. I recommend you draw explicitly on published measures of the concepts of your research, of course taking a critical look at them (not all published measures are good ones!) Many journal articles and books include their measures in appendices, and if they do not, they cite a particular data set which will allow you to find the original measures. Using existing measures will save you a great deal of time and effort in these papers.

**Tips:** In addition to past research articles you could find at the library, there are several sources you can use to help find measures for your research proposals:

1. Google Scholar ([www.google.com/scholar](http://www.google.com/scholar)). This site is also helpful for finding research articles.
2. ME (Your professor!!!). I am available to help you find measures for your research proposals.

*Conclusion:*

- Although you obviously cannot make any substantive conclusions without data, if your hypotheses were supported, how will that advance the field of criminal justice? If they were not supported, how might you explain the findings?
  - What would be the implications for future research based on your findings?
- What has the field of criminal justice learned from your research, and how can that research benefit society or the criminal justice agencies in any way?
- Be sure that your conclusions are tied directly to your hypotheses and research question.
- Present a very brief summary of your research project, and discuss the implications of your results.

*Reference Page*

- You **MUST** have **15 peer-reviewed journal articles!**
  - Examples include:
    - Deviant Behavior
    - Journal of Sex Research
    - Criminal Justice and Behavior
    - International Journal of Offender Therapy Comparative Criminology
    - Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency
    - Journal of Crime and Justice
    - Journal for Juvenile Justice & Detention Services
    - Journal for Juvenile Justice Services
    - Journal of Adolescent Research
    - Journal of Adolescent Health
    - Journal of Criminal Justice
    - Journal of Criminal Law
    - Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice Research and Education
    - Journal of Family Violence
- Use APA Citation Style Guide from my website for help
  - Also, please see “Citing Sources” below
- Must be in alphabetical order

See the end of this document for a general outline of what your “final” paper should be set up like and include.

*Group Assessment*

A Group Assessment **MUST** be turned in with every section of the paper. This group assessment must explain what each of the group members did on the assignment. In addition, you must also let me know if you think all of your group members are contributing the same amount of time, effort, and work. If a group member is not contributing as much as the other group members, this is your opportunity to tell me confidentially. I am not asking you to give a “grade” to your fellow group members but I do want to know in what way and how much each group member has contributed to the project.

### ***Further Guidelines***

The overall approach to the projects will be a “revise and resubmit” process – I will give you feedback on each submission of the paper, and before the next section of the paper is due, you will revise the previous sections as necessary. This will allow you to resolve any problems with your projects as they arise, and will ensure that your final paper is your best work.

Keep in mind that what we are doing in class is designed to inform your papers – do not forget to look at your notes from class and from your outside readings as you are preparing each section of the paper.

### ***Format***

The revised earlier sections of your paper should be included with each additional section when the new section is due. Thus, each submission of your papers will be a “complete” paper. You must also keep and resubmit the earlier sections of your papers **with my comments on them** – these should be included at the end of your paper.

All submissions of your papers must be typed, double-spaced, include a title page with the title of your project, and be **stapled**. Your pages must be **numbered**. Please refer to the end of this handout for guidelines on citing any sources you use for your papers. **All sources must be cited in-text and included in a “references” section at the end of each installment of your paper.** Failure to properly cite sources is plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, and will result in loss of credit for the work.

### ***Plagiarism and Academic Honesty***

Sources you use for any paper, exam, or other work you submit in this or any other class, **must be cited. This includes any published work, internet sources, notes from other classes you have taken, etc.** Remember that this is a general rule of academic work, and this holds for every paper you do in any class. The University Manual provides the University’s definitions of plagiarism, which you can refer to if you are interested. See below for examples of how to cite various sources.

In addition to providing citations for all sources you use, **you must not use the words of an author, even short phrases or fragments of sentences, without enclosing them in quotation marks and citing the page number from which the quote was taken.** When you submit work for a class, you are asserting that it is entirely your own work, unless you have permission from the instructor to collaborate with others on an assignment. If you use the words of an author without proper citation, you are essentially trying to “pass off” that author’s work as your own, and this is plagiarism by anyone’s definition.

Finally, it is important to recognize that ideas you received from anyone whose name does not appear on your paper must also be cited. The exception to this rule for this class is that I will not require that you cite ideas suggested by me or by other students in the class during our class meetings (that would get pretty complicated). However, if you receive assistance outside of our class meetings, you should acknowledge that assistance by citing the contributor.

In sum, I will expect on your assignments that you have not used external sources without citing them, that you have not used the words of an author without enclosing them in quotation marks, and that the work you have

submitted is entirely your own work . If you do not follow these guidelines, you will lose all credit for that work and I will submit a report to the Dean, as a minimum penalty. The penalty may be more severe, depending on the nature of the violation of academic honesty standards.

### ***Citing Sources***

The following information must be included in a “Works Cited” section at the end of each installment of your papers:

Author’s full name(s); date of publication; complete title of the article and source, including volume and page numbers for journal, magazine, or newspaper articles; publisher and place of publication for books; full internet address for internet sources; for citations from lecture notes, the instructor/speaker’s name, course or speech title, and date of the lecture.

In the **text** of your paper, you should indicate the author’s last name(s) and year of publication, followed by the page number if you have used a direct quotation. This information should follow the material that is drawn from that source, each time material from that source is used.

Examples:

#### **Journal articles:**

Doerner, Jill K. and Stephen Demuth. (2009). “The Independent and Joint Effects of Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Age on Sentencing Outcomes in U.S. Federal Courts.” *Justice Quarterly* 26(4) 254-296.

#### **Books:**

Hirschi, Travis. (1969). *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

#### **Articles or Chapters in Edited Volumes:**

Whiting, Beatrice and Carolyn Pope Edwards. (1975). “A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Sex Differences in the Behavior of Children Aged Three Through 11.” In S. Chess and A. Thomas (Eds.), *Annual Progress in Child Psychiatry and Child Development 1974*. New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers.

#### **Newspaper Articles:**

O’Neil, James. (1998). “Driven by Ego.” *The New York Times* July 28, 1998: F-7.

#### **Lectures:**

Doerner, Jill K. (2009). Lecture in *Sociological Research Methods*, February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**For more help with this, please use the APA Citation Guide on my website!**

## **Guideline for Final Paper:**

### Title Page

1. List the title of the project
2. Include all group members' names
3. Dr. Goodlin
4. CJ 420: Research Methods
5. Date Due

### Abstract

1. A paragraph summarizing your:
  - a. research question
  - b. hypotheses
  - c. key variables
  - d. data collection method

### Introduction

1. State the research question **AND** why it is worth researching

### Literature Review

- 1. MUST have 15 PEER-REVIEWED SOURCES**
2. Use proper citations!

### Hypotheses

1. State your hypotheses in sentence format
2. Make sure you indicate what your dependent and independent variables are for **EACH** hypothesis

### Methods Section:

1. What is your research question?
  - a. Explain it in no more than 3 sentences
2. Identify your target population **AND** sample population
  - a. Justify how you decided the size of your sample population
  - b. Aka who will be your subjects and why?
  - c. How many subjects will you recruit?
  - d. How will you recruit your subjects?
3. How many samples (aka how many times will you survey them) do you plan to achieve?
  - a. Please consider sampling error
  - b. Think about money, time, nature of study, etc.
  - c. Justify why you chose this many samples
4. Which mode of administration will you use to collect your data (aka quantitative or qualitative)?
  - a. Please justify why you chose the method(s) you did**
  - b. How you will utilize each method?**
  - c. What are the advantages AND disadvantages/limitations of each?**
  - d. Probability or Nonprobability
    - i. Which type?
  - e. Telephone, Face-to-Face, Self-administered/Self-report, or mixed-mode
  - f. Expected response rate

5. Who is likely to be a non-respondent in your survey?
  - a. What strategies will you use to reduce to proportion of the selected sample who are not contacted or refuse to participate?
6. How are you going to avoid issues of external and internal validity?
7. Submit a complete questionnaire (**MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING**)
  - a. A paragraph in the beginning of the questionnaire describing what this study is about & what institution you are representing
  - b. Questions concerning respondents' demographic characteristics
  - c. Questions measuring your independent variables, dependent variables, & other variables in your model
  - d. Why did you choose these particular questions
  - e. Response categories for each question with numbers by each
    - i. Make sure they are exhaustive and mutually exclusive
  - f. Any contingency questions
  - g. Any instructions for respondents or interviewers
    - i. How will you train your interviewers?
  - h. Ending sentences to thank respondents for their participation in the survey
8. Ethical Issues
  - a. Construct an interview consent form for the respondents
    - i. You may have to have a parental consent form
  - b. Describe how you will protect respondents' well-being
  - c. Will this be confidential or anonymous?
    - i. How will you ensure this?
9. Limitations & Generalizability of your study
10. Conclusion