



The Need to Teach Research Methods to Criminal Justice Students

Glasner AT*

Department of Criminal Justice and Security, Pace University, USA

***Corresponding author:** Aviva Twersky Glasner, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice, Department of Criminal Justice and Security, Pace University, 41 Park Row, New York, NY 10038, USA, Email: aglasner@pace.edu

Editorial

Volume 3 Issue 1

Received Date: March 25, 2025

Published Date: April 08, 2025

DOI: [10.23880/oajcij-16000131](https://doi.org/10.23880/oajcij-16000131)

Editorial

Many Criminal Justice students are not aware of the richness, quality and quantity of available data for use when conducting a research project. Students should know that conducting research is not all about “inventing the wheel” or even reinventing it. Genuine research is generated by having a question and a curiosity about something and looking for ways to satisfy this curiosity [1].

This editorial discusses how to teach undergraduate students how to generate research queries as well as the various types of data available and instructions on finding data sources. From accessing numerical data to analyzing the content of existing cases, there are many ways to conduct secondary analyses.

What are Primary and Secondary Data?

Primary data is the aggregate of data collected by the original researchers. Much of it is available for secondary analysis, as it is very often deposited with either the research funding agency or government websites. Students can also access data from the original researchers who have published their findings, by reaching out to them directly (look for bibliographical information on journal articles). Don't be shy; most researchers are happy to share (be sure to include them as a source or if you are looking to publish YOUR findings, a co-author. Robert Morgan, M.D. said “Just write and ask. You should also tell them the reason for your request. It might lead to a collaborative effort with them. They should know your intentions as to what you will do with their data [2].

Secondary analysis of primary data is using the primary to analyze for different or new purposes, i.e. using the US Census data, to build a new model of crime, to test an existing theory or to try to validate a concept to create a new theory.

Many students have difficulty using pre-existing data sources because they feel that they must create an original query, which generates existing data. This is not so, as we have such a rich source of primary data to use to create new queries and test new hypotheses. It is useful because it is valid and reliable data and saves the new researcher the time to collect new data. It is a very creative way for a new researcher to test new hypotheses or to validate existing theories. Some publishers, like Taylor & Francis, have a “data sharing policy/data availability statement” for their authors, (found online <https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/data-sharing-policies/>).

The neo-pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty, writing in his classic *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) commented, “To know is to represent accurately what is outside the mind” [3]. Hence, the task of a researcher is simplified by using the smooth transition from the field to the process of analysis, while the social science methodologist is tasked with devising a logic of data collection that accurately and completely [re] assigns social data.

Secondary data, often involving very large amounts of information banked in sizeable repositories, or gathered in physical or digital archives, are commonly the foundations of most current quantitative inquiries, especially in criminal justice and criminological research.

Crime, courts, police, and correctional research more often than not relies heavily on secondary data, i.e. data collected by large organizations for no specific purpose or project, or for reuse by researchers in various forms (e.g. numeric, directories, and some full-text) databases. Secondary data may also act as supportive information broadening the theoretical basis of a piece of research, adding critical nuances and detail to core information.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Secondary Data

Using secondary data has an array of advantages. It is easy, time-efficient, and low cost in contrast to data collection done by the researcher. While secondary data usually has clear validity and reliability trustworthiness, and the existence of a good deal of pre-existing literature may ease the researcher's tasks in reviewing, there is often a difficulty fitting the original collector's intent with the secondary user's research design. A well-worn problem might be with analyzing the nature and disposition of sexual assault convictions across the nation.

Secondary data, not unlike many elements of social science research in general and the special needs of criminological/criminal justice research in particular, are matters of trust and credibility, not only among researchers, but also as to the data collections, maintenance, and distributions of information. A general reliance on government, professional pollsters, and non-profit, non-sectarian, and neutral foundations have maintained the credibility of many big data piles, if only because objectivity

is a valuable resource when accurate prediction is the goal.

Secondary data, not unlike many elements of social science research in general and the special needs of criminological/criminal justice research in particular, are matters of trust and credibility, not only among researchers, but also as to the data collections, maintenance, and distributions of information. A general reliance on government, professional pollsters, and non-profit, non-sectarian, and neutral foundations have maintained the credibility of many big data piles, if only because objectivity is a valuable resource when accurate prediction is the goal.

References

1. Glasner A, Posadas C (2020) Criminal Justice Research Methods. Duboq, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.
2. Morgan R Found online Quora.com
3. Rorty R (1979) Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.