

**Fall 2015**  
**CCJS 699X Policy Research for Criminologists**

**Instructor:** Peter Reuter, X56367; Room 4113E, Van Munching Hall

**Time:** 9-11.45 Friday

**Office hours:** 2-4 Thursday

**Place:** Room LeFrak 2165E

email: preuter@umd.edu

Though criminology has a strong theoretical component, much of the motivation for the field is the ability of criminological research to improve the quality of life through better policy and program decisions. The creation of the journal *Criminology and Public Policy*, (*C&PP*) now an official journal of ASC, is indicative of the growing focus on policy issues. Other courses in the Department have given you the specific tools (analytic models, theory, statistical methods, knowledge about specific institutions) for contributing policy relevant research. This course is intended to help you focus those tools on relevant questions as well as augment the tools. There will be an emphasis on qualitative methods to augment the offerings in other CCJS courses.

This is a good time for policy research on crime and criminal justice. The remarkable decline in crime rates across the country has led to a search for explanations in programmatic and policy developments of the 1990-2010 era; how much did the rise in incarceration contribute, how much came from better policing and how much might reflect other policy fields such as education, health and housing? It has also led to a surprisingly strong interest in reducing the size of the American prison population; what are the most responsible ways of diverting offenders from incarceration while still meeting the obligation to deter and rehabilitate?

We will start by reviewing a few examples of good policy research, identifying the critical components and what makes these studies effective (1 class). The next stage is to critique a number of prominent policy studies that I think have important and different flaws: asking the wrong question, choosing an inappropriate method, gathering inappropriate data, and/or drawing the wrong policy inferences (1 class).

The bulk of the course is focused on methods used in policy research. Public policy research in criminal justice, though it follows general scientific principles, is distinctive in both its choice of questions and what constitutes a satisfactory answer; it is not merely applied criminology. There is, however, no general paradigm in terms of research methods. Rather, effective research requires familiarity with a wide variety of research techniques. This course, which will emphasize empirical research since the majority of dissertations are empirical rather than conceptual, covers a range of these techniques and illustrates how they can be used individually and jointly in policy research.

Qualitative interviews (2)

Survey research and crime statistics (3)

Case study (1)

- Simulation (1)
- Cost-benefit analysis (2)
- Combining multiple methods for policy research purposes (1)

After the first two weeks, the course is roughly divided into two equal segments. The first covers some methods of collecting data, qualitative and quantitative, which are commonly used in this kind of research; this supplements the variety of other courses offered that focus on data analysis. The emphasis is on survey research because so much empirical policy research relies on surveys and there is a lot of potential insight (rarely realized) in understanding the process that generates the specific data being used. Qualitative interviews are a staple of criminology and they have produced important findings, even in the highly quantitative climate of recent years. The second half presents some analytic techniques, apart from those you acquire in other CCJS courses, that are also commonly used. None of them involve classical statistics but they are often quantitative, such as simulations and cost-benefit analysis.

The coverage of topics here is by no means complete. It represents partly what I observe has been important for other PhD students and what has been important in my own policy research career. I am open to suggestions of other topics in the later weeks of the course and will have a discussion of this on October 25.

### *Course Requirements*

The course emphasizes discussion and writing. The class is small, probably 7 students and it will only work if you all come in prepared to discuss the readings. Participation includes asking questions of other students' presentations, which also encourages constructive collegial criticism. You will be required to write and present one research paper and to do at least two other written and oral assignments during the semester. Examples of assignments include: carrying out three in-depth interviews and writing them up as well as presenting the results in class; comparing alternative methods of estimating the number of crimes in the United States or critiquing an evaluation paper for its policy interpretation.

The research paper (15-20 pages), will require use of one or more of the analytic or data collection techniques examined in the course. It is a methodological paper; it requires that you first identify a good question (i.e. both of policy and technical interest) and then discuss alternative methods for answering that question. It is not a review of the literature, though that is a one component. Paper topics should reflect your policy interests. For example if you are interested in mass incarceration, you might try to design research that assessed its consequences for high deprivation neighborhoods. A drug policy topic would be how to design an evaluation of the Colorado marijuana legalization. I have just finished chairing a National Academy of Sciences panel on illicit tobacco markets a topic of great interest in the public health community; a good paper topic might be how to assess the risks faced by cigarette

smugglers. A proposal should be submitted by October 15 and I will discuss that with you and/or provide written comments within ten days. The paper should be submitted in a draft form by November 20; I will return the draft with suggestions for revisions one week later. The grade will reflect both the quality of the draft and the improvements achieved in the revisions, which will be due by the Friday after the last class.

The grade will be based on

- a. Class participation (20%)
- b. Class presentations (15%)
- c. Paper (35%)
- d. Assignments (30%)

There are three text books. The other readings will be available through the course Canvas site or, if in journals to which the library subscribes, can be downloaded. I make extensive use of articles from *Criminology and Public Policy* (C&PP in the syllabus) because that is the journal of reference for public policy research by criminologists.

### **Text Books**

Fowler, Floyd J. (2013). *Survey Research Methods* (5<sup>th</sup> edition). Sage Publications [3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> edition acceptable]

Warren, C and T Karner (2010) *Discovering Qualitative Methods* Oxford University Press (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Kleiman, Mark (2009) *When Brute Force Fails: How to Have Less Crime and Less Punishment* Princeton University Press

### **Optional Text**

Weiss, R. (1994) *Learning from Strangers* Free Press [very practical guide on qualitative interviews]

## **Schedule**

### **1) September 4. Introduction and Policy research; what we might aspire to**

Course objectives, organization. Statement of student interests.

Examine three first rate policy studies. In each study what is the specific policy question being asked? What justifies the methods and data chosen? How well do the authors explain the domain of generalization and the limits of the analysis?

#### *Readings*

Caulkins, Jonathan P., C. Peter Rydell, William L. Schwabe, and James Chiesa. 1997. *Mandatory Minimum Drug Sentences: Throwing Away the Key or the Taxpayers' Money?* RAND, Santa Monica, CA.

[http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/2006/MR827.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/2006/MR827.pdf) [Summary pp.xv-xxvi; Chapters 2-3]

Kurlychek, Brame, B and S. Bushway (2006) Scarlet Letters and recidivism: Does an Old Criminal Record Predict Future Offending? *Criminology and Public Policy* **5(3)** 483-504. Also Pager commentary pp.501-514

Nagin and Weisburd (2013) "Evidence and Public Policy: The Example of Evaluation Research in Policing" *C&PP* **12 (4)** 651-679

## **2) September 11** Critical Assessment of policy research

After assessing two weaker policy studies (posing the same three questions as in the 1<sup>st</sup> class), we turn to a discussion of the general methodological issues of moving from criminological research to policy conclusions. The Sampson et al reading is tough but very good.

### *Readings*

Padgett, K., Bales, W. and T. Blomberg (2006) "Under Surveillance: An Empirical test of the effectiveness and consequences of electronic monitoring" *Criminology and Public Policy* **5(1)** 61-92

International Center for Science in Drug Policy (2010) *Effect of Drug Law Enforcement on Drug-Related Violence: Evidence from a Scientific Review*

Sampson, R., Winship, C. and Knight (2013) Translating Causal Claims: Principles and Strategies for Policy-Relevant Criminology *C&PP* **12 (4)** pp. 587-616

## **3) September 18 Qualitative Interviews: Design and Strategies:**

Comparisons of qualitative and quantitative data and their utility. When is qualitative data collection appropriate and how is qualitative data used in policy research.

For what kinds of policy research is a small number of interviews worth while? How to select respondents, prepare questions, conduct interviews, record responses and analyze the data.

Each student will be asked to conduct three interviews in the following week on a topic agreed to in class. In my own current research, there is a great deal of interest in the behavior of frequent marijuana users; three interviews about the social circumstances of their usual use session would be very helpful. Let's discuss topics of interest to you; not everybody has to tackle the same one.

### *Readings*

Tewkesbury, R. (2009) "Qualitative versus Quantitative Methods: Understanding Why Qualitative Methods are Superior for Criminology and Criminal Justice" *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Criminology*, Vol 1 (1) [deliberately provocative, as befits an article in a new journal for an emerging field]

Dilley, Patrick "Conducting Successful Interviews: Tips for Intrepid Research" *Theory into Practice*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Summer, 2000), pp. 131-137

Warren, C and T Karner (2010) *Discovering Qualitative Methods* Chapters 6&7 pp.151-214

Weiss, R. (1994) *Learning from Strangers* Free Press [good guidance about preparing for interviews, particularly Chapter 4 (pp.61-121) in which he critiques specific interview transcripts.]

#### **4) September 25 Surveys (I)**

Basic techniques of survey research. Selecting sampling frames and sample size, alternative techniques for conducting interviews (telephone, mail, in-person) and the trade-offs among them.

The Maltz reading is an overview of the Uniform Crime Reports, which is essentially a survey like others. The Lynch reading is an excellent assessment of the potential for victimization surveys.

##### *Readings*

Fowler Chapters 1-5 (**except 4**)

Maltz, M. (1999) *Bridging the Gaps in Police Crime Data* Bureau of Justice Statistics [pp.1-40]

Lynch, J. (2006) "Problems and Promise of Victimization Surveys for Cross-National Research" *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research* Vol 34 pp.229-287.

#### **5) October 2 (a) Personal Interviews: Presentations**

Student presentations based on the interviews; discussion of what was learned both from the interviews and the process.

##### **(b) Integrating Qualitative Materials into Policy Research (45 minutes)**

Throughout my career I have used multiple sources of data for policy research. I will discuss one illustrative study.

##### *Readings*

Reuter, P. (1993) "The Cartage Industry in New York" in Tonry, Michael and Albert Reiss (eds.) *Beyond the Law: Crime in Complex Organizations*. Vol. 18 of *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, pp.149-202.[read just for the methodological aspects; identify what kinds of data are used and how they are put together for drawing the policy relevant conclusions.]

**October 2 Assignment 2 given out: Assessment of a crime-related survey**

**October 8 Paper on qualitative interviews due**

#### **6) October 9. Surveys (II)**

Dealing with non-response. Surveying elusive populations. What can and cannot be studied through surveys. Limitations of survey data.

##### *Readings*

Fowler 4,7,8; skim11

Cantor, D. and J. Lynch "Exploring the Effects of Changes in Design on the Analytical Uses of the NCVS Data" *J. Quant Criminology* **21** 293-319

DaVanzo, J.; J. Hawes-Dawson; R.B. Valdez; G. Vernez 1994 *Surveying Immigrant Communities* (skim Chapters 1 and 2; read 3 and 4)

Reuter, P., MacCoun, R. and P. Murphy (1990) *Money from Crime: A Study of the Economics of Drug Dealing in Washington, D.C.* The RAND Corporation. Appendices B & C [pp.118-147]

### October 15 Paper topic due

#### 7) October 16 Surveys of sensitive behaviors

Crime surveys involve a range of topics that raise concerns to the respondents. How to deal with this problem in data collection and in interpretation of survey data.

##### *Readings*

(a) Series of paper about gun use surveys; don't have to read every word.

Cook (1985) "The Case of the Missing Victims: Gunshot Woundings in the National Crime Survey" *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 1(1)

Kleck, Gary and Marc Gertz (1995), "Armed Resistance to Crime: The Prevalence and Nature of Self-Defense with a Gun," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 86(1), pp. 150-187.

Cook, Ludwig, & Hemenway (1997) "The gun debate's new mythical number: How many defensive uses per year?" *J. of Policy Analysis & Management* 16(3) 463-469

Hemenway, D. (1997) "Survey Research and Defensive Gun Use: An Explanation for Extreme Over-Estimates" *J. Criminal Law and Criminology* 87 (4)

Smith, T. (1997) "A Call for a Truce in the DGU War" *J. Criminal Law and Criminology* 87 (4) 462-469

What do you conclude is the best interpretation of the survey data on defensive gun use?

(b) Other crime related surveys

Rand, M and C.M. Renisson (2005) "Bigger is not Necessarily Better: An Analysis of Violence Against Women Estimates from the National Crime Victimization Survey and the National Violence Against Women Survey" *J. Quantitative Criminology* 21 (3) 267-291

Caspar, R.(1992) "Follow-up of Non-Respondents in 1990" in Turner, Lessler and Gfoerer (eds.) *Survey Measurement of Drug Use: Methodological Studies* National Institute on Drug Abuse pp.155-176

### October 21; paper topics returned with comments

#### 8) October 23 Case study methodology

When to choose a case study to answer a research question. How to design and execute a case study. "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." (Yin, p.13) It is a methodology often used in policy research but rarely with much rigor.

### Readings

Yin, Robert (2008) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Sage Publications Chapters 1 and 2

Greene, J. (1999) "Zero Tolerance: A Case Study of Police Policies and Practices in New York City" *Crime and Delinquency* **45** 171-187

Hope, T. (1994) "Problem Oriented Policing and Drug Market Locations: Three Case Studies" *Crime Prevention Studies*

Prenzler, Tim, Louise Porter, and Geoffrey P. Alpert. (2013): "Reducing police use of force: case studies and prospects." *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 18.2 (343-356).

### October 29: Memos on survey assignment due

#### 9) October 30 What does it take for policy research to become effective?

Only a few criminology/criminal justice studies have an impact on policy. On the other hand there are some fields in which research, cumulatively, seems to have a major influence: problem oriented policing, drug courts, rehabilitation programs.

#### Readings

J. Petersilia (2007) "Influencing public policy: an embedded criminologist reflects on California prison reform" *J. Experimental Criminology* **4** 335-356 [easy read about her experience as a criminologist involved in policy. Focus on the "Lessons" starting p.347]

Tonry, M. "'Public criminology' and evidence-based policy" *C&PP* **9(4)** 783-797 [assessment about characteristics of research, policy, situations etc. that lead to research having an influence on policy]

Each student will undertake their own reading in one of three areas: (1) Response to domestic violence (focusing on Sherman and Berk, Minneapolis domestic violence experiment) (2) Project Hope (Kleiman's theory of mandated desistance of drug using offenders in parole or probation) (3) your own choice. Come prepared to give a 5 minute presentation on what you have chosen.

#### 10) November 6 Simulation as an analytic technique

For many policy problems there are some data and a broad understanding of relationships among policy levers and outcomes of interest but not enough of either to develop empirically estimated models. These are candidates for simulation modeling. I have frequently worked with a simple type of simulation model, built on highly detailed modeling. Inelegant but very useful.

#### Readings

Greenwood et al. (1996) *Diverting Children from a Life of Crime* RAND ([www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR699](http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR699)) [Executive Summary, Chapters 3-4]

Auerbahn, K (2008) "Using simulation modeling to evaluate sentencing

reform in California: choosing the future” *J. Experimental Criminology* 4 241-266  
Axelrod, R (2003) “Advancing the Art of Simulation in the Social Sciences”  
*Japanese Journal for Management Information System*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Dec.  
]

### **11) November 13 Discounting and Principles of Benefit Cost Analysis**

A fundamental complication for evaluation is that program costs and benefits are distributed over time and have to be put into a common metric. First half of the class is about time discounting. The second half of the class goes over the basic concepts and techniques of cost-benefit analysis. The Stokey and Zeckhauser text is very old but it is exceptionally clear as an exposition of the basic concepts.

#### *Readings*

Stokey and Zeckhauser (1978) *A Primer for Policy Analysis* Chapter 10 159-177  
Cohen, Mark (2000) “Measuring the Costs and Benefits of Crime and Justice” in *Measurement and Analysis of Crime and Justice: Vol 4 of Criminal Justice 2000* National Institute of Justice pp. 263-316 [this has most of what appeared in his textbook on the same subject in 2005]

**November 20, draft final paper due**

### **12) November 20 Cost-Benefit Analysis in the Criminal Justice System<sup>1</sup>**

Criminal justice presents distinctive problems for cost benefit analysis, both because of limited data and specific conceptual issues. In this class we will review a series of studies of the costs of crime and then how these have been applied to particular interventions, such as sentencing alternatives, lighting of high risk locations and prison construction.

#### *Readings*

Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2004) *Washington’s Drug Offender Sentencing Alternative: An Evaluation of Benefits and Costs* [10 pages]

Painter, K. and D. Farrington (1997) “The Financial Benefits of Improved Lighting Based on Crime Reduction” *Lighting Research and Technology* Vol. 33 3-10 [Smith]

Farrington, David P., and Christopher J. Koegl. (2014) "Monetary Benefits and Costs of the Stop Now And Plan Program for Boys Aged 6–11, Based on the Prevention of Later Offending." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 31.2 263-287.

Greenwood et al. (1996) *Diverting Children from a Life of Crime* RAND ([www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR699](http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR699)) [Executive Summary, Chapters 3-4]

**Nov 24, draft paper returned with comments**

### **13) December 4 [Topic to be decided at class of September 25]**

Potential topics include: demography (as technique), normative analysis, political analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> We will have to find an alternative date for class meeting since I have presentations that day at ASC.

#### **14) December 11 (a) Assessing some Policy Research**

Twelve classes after you first examined some policy research, you have the opportunity to test your critical skills on two substantial examples, one by myself and one by a long-time collaborator. Criticism is encouraged. Also assess the policy conclusions of the major National Academy of Sciences Report on mass incarceration.

##### *Readings*

Travis, Jeremy, Bruce Western, and Steve Redburn, eds. *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences*. National Academies Press, 2014. {Chapter 13 only; Findings, Conclusions and Implications; pp.334-357}

Kleiman, Mark (2009) *When Brute Force Fails: How to Have Less Crime and Less Punishment* Chapters 1-3, 7-8

Boyum, D. & P. Reuter (2005) *An Analytic Assessment of U.S. Drug Policy* American Enterprise Institute [in Chapter 3 skip “Dynamics of Drug Budgets” and “Prevention”]

#### **(b) Presentations of final paper**

**December 16 Final versions of papers due**