

Sociology of Crime Quantitative Assignment - Research Proposal

One of the hallmarks of sociology is that when we have questions about the social world we have the tools to go out and find the answers to our questions. In this class, as you are introduced to the debates and misconceptions about criminals and victims, patterns of crime, and the reasons people commit crimes, you will undoubtedly have many questions. This project will provide you with the opportunity to imagine how a social scientist would go about answering some of your questions by writing a research proposal using a dataset from the ICPSR website.

Start by compiling a list of questions that you have related to the course topic. You can start now and add to the list as we go through these first few weeks of class. Once you have some idea of your own interests, peruse the ICPSR website and look for datasets that could be used to explore the questions you have.

NOTE: Since this is a sociology class, your project should be focused on a sociological question and use social science methods. Please see me in advance if you are unsure that your project fits these criteria.

All 3 parts of this project will be submitted electronically on Blackboard. Computer/internet problems will not be accepted as legitimate excuses for lateness. I advise you to avoid working at the last minute! All late assignments will be penalized 10 points per day (including weekends).

Part 1: Topic Selection & Data Set

Grade Criteria: 10 Percent of Final Grade

Date Due: March 23, 10 AM

The purpose of this assignment is to get you to begin strategizing about your project. In a 1-2 page double-spaced paper contemplate and answer the following questions.

1. What is the broad topic that interests you? Why is this topic interesting to you? (You may write in first person.)
2. What have you already learned about this topic – in class and through research you have done on this topic?
3. What is the specific research question you will try to answer? (Make sure that this is a question you can reasonably answer.)
4. What dataset are you using?
5. What variables in this dataset do you expect to be useful? Why?

The questions provided here are guidelines, not bullet points that should be answered separately. Any paper that is not written in prose will receive a low grade.

Part 2: Research Question and Annotated Bibliography

Grade Criteria: 10 Percent of Final Grade

Date Due: April 6, 10 AM

1. Restate your research question. (It may have changed and refined since your initial submission).
2. You will write an annotated bibliography that includes
 - a. The citation information for 6 new sources you will use in your paper (beyond those assigned in this class). Use APA format.
 - b. An annotation for each article that includes
 - i. A brief summary of the article (what are the major arguments/findings).
 - ii. An assessment of the article – indicating strengths/weaknesses. You may also want to compare this source to other sources in your bibliography.

- iii. A reflection on how this article may be used in the Background & History section of your final paper.
- c. Before you write your annotation, you should thoroughly read each item you include. These sources should actually show up in your final paper (unless you discuss changes with me first).
- d. **DO NOT** cut and past from the abstract. Limit your annotation to a paragraph or two. Be brief but also be clear. (You are welcome to ask for help from your classmates and me, just make sure that the final product is your own work.)

Part 4: Final Proposal

Grade Criteria: 25 Percent of Final Grade

Date Due: April 27, 10 AM

You will write a research proposal that justifies and explains the research project that you would conduct to answer the research question that you have. This paper will look like an abbreviated version of the kind of proposal that you might submit to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) or National Science Foundation (NSF). Thus, you should use formal language (avoid first person, contractions, slang, etc.). You will also need to include at least 6 academic sources (from journal articles).

Format of paper:

1. **Introduction:** Provide a general introduction to your proposal.
2. **Background and History:** How have researchers approached this area of inquiry before you? What is the limitation or problem in this body of research that you are trying to address? Why is this limitation an important issue to address?
3. **Research Question:** Identify your research question. Explain how answering this question will address the hole in current research that you pointed out in the previous section.
4. **Proposed Project:** What dataset do you plan to use? What variables in your dataset will help answer your questions? What does your preliminary analysis of these variables reveal?
5. **Findings:** What did you find? How did your research question evolve? Did you see what you expected?
6. **Conclusion:** Summarize your project – what are you doing, why is it important, what data will you use and how will this project contribute to the field of sociology of crime studies?

Audience – Assume that your reader does not know much about this topic. Be clear. Define your terms.

Length – Your paper should be a minimum of 6 pages. (Penalties will be incurred for being too short, using large/small font, and overly adjusting margins.)

Citations – Your paper should be properly cited using APA format. Use in-text citations to support claims and statements. All cited sources should appear in the works cited page. **DO NOT** “pad” the bibliography with citations not referenced in the text. Avoid quoting me directly in your paper.

Headings – You should use headings (“Background and History”, “Research Question,” etc.) in the same way that you see these headings in research proposals and journal articles. This practice will help you to (1) keep your paper organized and (2) make it clear to me that you have included all of the required sections.

If you are concerned about your grade in this class, then this project should be a priority for you. I encourage you to get help from as many places as possible. Meet with me, get feedback from your peers, and go to the writing center. The more effort you put in, the better your final project will be. I promise.