Texas State University
School of Criminal Justice
Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam for Research Methods
July 2, 2014
12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

DIRECTIONS: Choose Option One or Option Two.
Save two electronic copies of your answer – one with just your ID number
assigned to you, the other with your ID number and name. Email both copies
to Cybele Hinson ch56@txstate.edu. Print out and turn in a hard copy as well
with both your ID number and name on it.

OPTION 1
The city manager of a small, but growing, suburb of Dallas (population 25,000) is
concerned about the police department. Specifically, the department seems to
generate a high number of citizen complaints. Most of these complaints are from
racial and ethnic minorities and allege racist behavior on the part of police officers
during stops. Although none of the complaints have been sustained, area advocacy
groups have accused the department of being “insensitive toward minority
residents.” The racial and ethnic percentages within the community are as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian or White</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American or Black</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some other race</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Hispanic (any race)</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (any race)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The city manager, who is an alumnus of the university you work for, has hired you
to conduct a citizen’s survey. The purpose of this survey is to “determine whether
racial and ethnic minority citizens believe the police department is racist and why.”

How would you address the key methodological issues while preparing to conduct
this research? Use the following list as an outline for your response.

1. How would your sampling plan produce a sample that would:
   a. ensure all racial and ethnic groups are proportionally represented, and
   b. be scientifically representative of the community's population?
2. What is your dependent variable and at least two of your independent variables? Justify your decision to include these variables.
3. Briefly, discuss how you intend to operationalize each of these concepts within the context of the survey and its questions.
4. Assume you are using a survey, what strategy would you use to distribute the survey instrument (that is consistent with your sampling plan above)?
5. Do you anticipate potential problems with reliability and validity? If so, how do you intend to address these problems?
6. Are there any potential ethical issues relating to this survey? If so, how do you intend to address these issues?
7. Given the city manager’s stated purpose of the survey, is it important to differentiate between respondents that have and have not actually been stopped by the police? Explain your response.

**OPTION 2**

Below is an abstract of a recent article:¹

Two waves of longitudinal data from a high-poverty sample of minority youth living in extreme poverty were used to determine if the nexus (or intersection) of gang membership at T1, exposure to violence at T1, and violent behavior at T1 are a precursor of first-time gun carrying at T2. The findings indicated a significant amount of overlap between gang membership, exposure to violence, and violent behavior. The multivariate findings also revealed that: (1) the effect of exposure to violence at T1 on initiation of gun carrying at T2 became non-significant after controlling for gang membership at T1 and violent behavior at T1; and (2) only 1.8% of youth were part of the nexus of gang membership at T1, exposure to violence at T1, and violent behavior at T1, but they were 665% more likely to initiate gun carrying at T2. The theoretical and policy implications of the findings for the prevention of youth gun violence, as well as areas for future research, are discussed.

1. In this study, identify the dependent and independent variables. (Discuss what makes each variable a dependent or independent variable.)
2. Secondary data were relied upon for this study; what are some known weaknesses of such data and how could they have affected this study?
3. Discuss the criteria for causality (in general) and more specifically whether causality was or was not established (how/how not?).
4. Discuss any two threats to validity (any type) and how they relate to this study.
5. What additional information would you need to determine if the results of this study have high external validity?
6. Discuss what ethical considerations (if any) would need to be considered prior to conducting this study.