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For Sara, Micah, and Ted and my fellow
Sharks . . . Happy Laps
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Preface

I’ve been very lucky. I have had the privilege of teaching introductory research methods and have been able to share all that I know and continue to learn about this fascinating topic. This ninth edition of Exploring Research reflects much of what has taken place in my classrooms over those years.

This book is intended for upper-level undergraduate students and graduate students in their first research methods course in the social, behavioral, and health sciences fields. These students are the primary audience. But, lately, other disciplines have been introducing research methods courses to their curriculum, such as public policy, government, journalism, and related fields, and students there have been using Exploring Research as well. And, recently, even such fields as American Studies and Ethnomusicology have started incorporating the types of methods we talk about here.

Exploring Research is intended to provide an introduction to the important topics in the general area of research methods and to do so in a nonintimidating and informative way. The existence of a ninth edition of Exploring Research means that the audience for a straightforward and unassuming presentation of this material still exists, and I believe that audience is growing. I’m grateful for those who have chosen to use this book.

New to the Edition

Many of the changes are the result of suggestions from students and faculty. Here are the major changes in this ninth edition.

• Rather than SPSS, whatever data analysis discussions take place, Excel is the tool of choice. This is because Excel is available almost everywhere including colleges, universities, and other institutions and many users of this book already have it installed on their own computers. I am assuming that even the beginning research methods students have some rudimentary computer and Excel skills.

• More coverage of ethics because this is becoming increasingly important as a topic that beginning researchers need to know about. There’s more on the history of how ethical practices have progressed as well as a brief coverage of some important case studies.

• After lots of discussion with faculty who have adopted this book, it was decided that the answers to the end-of-chapter questions should go at the end of the book in a separate appendix (Appendix C) of its own.

• The online sources for more exploration are increased by about 25% as well.

• Updated and new coverage of software for dealing with qualitative data and the development and refinement of bibliographies.

• Inserted after many sections are questions that will help the reader summarize the content in that part of the chapter and serve, if so desired, as a taking-off point for discussion. These Test Yourself questions don’t necessarily have a right or a wrong answer—they are there to help facilitate thinking and discussion about the topic at hand.

• The material on the use of the Internet for research is updated with more information about conducting research and literature reviews online and including new information on how social media can be used in a research context. Information on previous topics such as e-mail, that were once new to our research endeavors, but are now old hat, has been significantly reduced to allow room for other material such as expanded and updated coverage.

• Appendix A that provides some tips and tricks for using Excel for data analysis.

• The last chapter contains information about the use of the latest, sixth, edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

How This Book Is Organized

Exploring Research is organized into 14 chapters (with a big and little Chapters 3A and 3B, respectively) and three appendices. Chapter 1, The Role and Importance of Research, covers the basics about the scientific method and includes a brief description of the different types of research that are most commonly used in the social and behavioral sciences.

Chapter 2, The Research Process: Coming to Terms, focuses on some of the basic terms and concepts in research methods, including variables, samples, populations, hypotheses, and the concept of significance.

The first step for any researcher is the selection of a problem, which is what Chapter 3A, Selecting a Problem and Reviewing the Research, is all about. Here, you will learn how to use the library and its vast resources to help you
focus your interests and actually turn them into something you want to know more about! You will also be introduced to the use of electronic sources of reference material, such as online searches, and how using the Internet can considerably enhance your research skills.

A new Chapter 3B, The Importance of Practicing Ethics in Research, talks about the ethical practices and ethical concerns in research.

The content of Chapter 4, Sampling and Generalizability, is critical to understanding the research process. How you select the group of participants and how and when the results of an experiment can be generalized from this group to others is a fundamental premise of all scientific research. In this chapter, you will read all about this process.

What is research without measuring outcomes? Not much, I’m afraid. Chapter 5, Measurement, Reliability, and Validity, introduces you to the measurement process and the important concepts of reliability and validity. You need to understand not only the principles of measurement but also the methods used to measure behavior. That is what you will learn in Chapter 6, Methods of Measuring Behavior, which discusses different types of tests and their importance.

Once you understand what you want to study and the importance of measuring it, the only thing left to do is to go out and collect data! Chapter 7, Data Collection and Descriptive Statistics, takes you through the process step by step and includes a summary of important descriptive statistics and how they can be used.

One of the reasons data are collected is to make inferences from a smaller group of people to a larger one. In Chapter 8, Introducing Inferential Statistics, you will find an introduction to the discipline of the same name and how results based on small groups are inferred to larger ones.

Chapter 9, Nonexperimental Research: Descriptive and Correlational Methods, is the first of four chapters that deal with different types of research methods. In this chapter, you will learn about descriptive and correlational methods.

Chapter 10, Nonexperimental Research: Qualitative Methods, provides the reader with an introduction to various qualitative tools, including case studies, ethnographies, and historical methods, and talks a bit about the advantages and disadvantages of each. I hope that you find this new chapter helpful and that it will give you another set of tools to answer important and interesting questions.

Chapter 11, Pre- and True Experimental Research Methods, and Chapter 12, Quasi-Experimental Research: A Close Cousin to Experimental Research, continue the overview of research methods by introducing you to the different types of research designs that explore the area of cause and effect. Developmental research is discussed in Chapter 12.

Chapter 13, Writing a Research Proposal, reviews the steps involved in planning and writing a proposal and includes an extensive set of questions that can be used to evaluate your proposal. If your research methods course does not include the preparation of a proposal as a requirement, this chapter can be used as a stand-alone instructional tool.

Exploring Research ends with Chapter 14, Writing a Research Manuscript, a step-by-step discussion of how to prepare a manuscript for submission to a journal for publication using the format prescribed by the sixth edition of Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Appendix A is a compilation of Excel tips for use in data analysis. Appendix B contains a sample data set that is used in certain examples throughout the book, and this data set can also be downloaded from www.pearsonhighered.com/irc. Appendix C contains the answers to the exercises found at the end of each chapter.

What’s Special about This Book?

Several features from previous editions continue to be included in this edition that I hope will help make this book more useful and the learning of the material more interesting. These features have not changed because the feedback from both faculty and students has been so positive.

• Most chapters begin with a Research Matters entry that illustrates how research in the social and behavioral sciences is conducted using the chapter contents as a focus.

• You will find notes that highlight important points contained in the text. These can be used for review purposes and help to emphasize especially important points.

• Those Test Yourself questions mentioned earlier.

• Last, but not least, is a glossary of important terms found at the end of the book. The terms that you find in the glossary appear in boldface in the text.

A Note to the Instructor

All teachers tend to use teaching materials in different ways and I tried to complete this edition in such a way that the chapters can be read through in an order different from what is contained in the table of contents. For example, some instructors tell me that they start with Chapter 14 because a central element in their course is writing a research report. Others start with Chapter 4 on sampling and others go right from descriptive statistics to correlational methods. There is, of course, some mention of materials from previous and upcoming chapters throughout, but these are relatively few and will not bear on your students’ access to the information they need to understand the ideas under discussion.

Also, if you want to know more about Excel and its application to statistics, you can look at two other books which I have done, published by Sage, including Excel Statistics, Third Edition, and the Excel edition of Statistics.
Preface

for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics, Fourth Edition. And, of course, e-mail me at njs@ku.edu should you have any questions.

Finally, you can learn more about supplements that are available for this book by going to www.pearsonhighered.com.

How to Use This Book

I have tried to write this book so that it is (you guessed it) user friendly. Basically, what I think this means is that you can pick it up, understand what it says, and do what it suggests. One reviewer and user of an earlier edition was put off at first by the easy-going way in which the book is written. My philosophy is that important and interesting ideas and concepts need not be written about in an obtuse and convoluted fashion. Simple is best. You see, your mother was right!

Whether you are using this book as the main resource in a research methods course or as a supplemental text, here are some hints on how to go about using the book to make the most out of the experience.

• Read through the Contents (page vii) so you can get an idea of what is in the book.
• Take your time and do not try to read too much at one sitting. You will probably be assigned one chapter per week. Although it is not an enormous task to read the 20–30 pages that each chapter contains in one sitting, breaking your reading up by main chapter sections might make things a little easier. Too much too soon leads to fatigue, which in turn leads to frustration, and then no one is happy!
• Do the exercises at the end of each chapter. They will give you further insight into the materials that you just read and some direct experience with the techniques and topics that were covered.
• Write down questions you might have in the margins of pages where things seem unclear. When you are able, ask your professor to clarify the information or bring your questions to your study group for discussion.

Available Instructor Resources

The following resources are available for instructors. These can be downloaded at http://www.pearsonhighered.com/irc>Login required.

• PowerPoint—provides a core template of the content covered throughout the text. Can easily be expanded for customization with your course.
• Instructor’s Manual—includes an overview, set of objectives, important terms and concepts for in-class discussions for each chapter.

• Test Bank—includes additional questions beyond the chapter-end exercises in multiple choice, and open-ended—short and essay response—formats.
• MyTest—an electronic format of the Test Bank to customize in-class tests or quizzes. Visit: http://www.pearsonhighered.com/mytest.

A Big Thanks

All textbooks have the author’s name on the cover, but no book is ever the work of a single person. Such is also the case with Exploring Research.

Many people helped make this book what it is, and they deserve the thanks that I am offering here. Chris Cardone, way back at Macmillan, was the inspiration for this book. She remains the best of editors and a close friend. Special thanks to Kristin Teasdale for her assistance on previous editions. Special thanks also to Doug Bell who worked long and hard to make this edition possible.

I take full responsibility for the errors and apologize to those students and faculty who might have used earlier editions of the book and had difficulty because of the mistakes. As many of those screwups (that is exactly the phrase) have been removed as is humanly possible.

Finally, as always, words cannot express my gratitude to Leni for her support and love that see projects like this through to the end. And to Sara, Micah and Ted, my deepest admiration and respect as they continue to build professional and personal lives of their own. These people are making the world a better place.

So, now it is up to you. Use the book well. Enjoy it and I hope that your learning experience is one filled with new discoveries about your area of interest as well as about your own potential. I would love to hear from you about the book, including what you like and do not like, suggestions for changes, or whatever. You can reach me through snail mail or e-mail.

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