BASICS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE APPROACHES

THIRD CANADIAN EDITION

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Preface

Many students approach a first course on social research with anxiety and trepidation. Some of them associate the course with mathematics and statistics, which they may have had an unpleasant experience with; some may have struggled in natural science courses that used experiments; and some do not know what to expect from a course in social research and believe it is beyond them and only for advanced, very smart scholars. Many students delay taking the required "methods" course until the last semester of their degree—although the course is often meant to be taken in the second year of study. Indeed, courses in research methods often carry the unfortunate reputation that they are difficult or boring. As university professors who have considerable experience teaching these courses, the authors are well aware of the inherent challenges of convincing students that the study of methods can be enjoyable!

Basics of Social Research introduces you to social research and presents "what researchers do and why" in a nonthreatening manner that captures both the excitement and the importance of doing "real" research. Once you overcome any anxiety and recognize what research is actually about, you will probably find it fascinating. A course in social research methodology differs from most other social science courses. Most courses examine content topics such as inequality, crime, racial divisions, gender relations, urban society, and so forth. A methodology course is relevant, as it prepares you to think more systematically about content and also reveals how content findings are created. That is, this social research method teaches you how the knowledge in social sciences comes into being.

This book aims to make the information it presents easy to understand and accessible, but that does not mean that it is simplistic. Indeed, proper research is a serious activity, and often how well a study was conducted can have real consequences on many outcomes, including how policies and laws are put in place. An underlying goal of this book is to show you how social research has very real applications in real life—it is not just a topic you are forced to learn for your degree requirements. It is something that you can take with you as a skill and be critical of what the media are telling you about results from the "latest poll." Just as the actual daily work of a nurse, social worker, police officer, teacher, physician, or counsellor often involves serious issues that have real implications for people's lives, so does social research.

Basics of Social Research has three goals. First, it seeks to show you that social research is simultaneously an important enterprise and one that is not beyond you—you *can* understand it. And it can even be interesting and fun. Second, it uses many examples from "real research" in published Canadian studies to show you the origins of the findings and information found in textbooks or in the media. Finally, it gives you a foundation for further learning about research and shows you that this activity requires dedication, creativity, and mature judgment.

This book is a shortened version of a larger, in-depth textbook on social research that one of the authors (Neuman) first wrote about 20 years ago and that has been updated many times since then. It was written to provide an uncomplicated introduction to social research for students with a limited background in research.

Like most written works, this book, too, reflects its authors. From the beginning, we have been firmly committed to the value of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. We believe that each approach offers a distinct as well as a complementary perspective to understanding the social world and that both approaches are equally important and necessary.

NEW IN THE THIRD CANADIAN EDITION

This new edition has been thoroughly updated and revised for the Canadian market. Key revisions to the content include the following:

- Updated Canadian information and examples throughout
- More detailed content on the components of social theory and the introduction of newer types of social theory (Chapter 3)
- New content on the importance of proper source citation and the steps to proper paraphrasing of research literature (Chapter 4)
- More detailed and simplified explanation of the standard deviation and its applications (Chapter 11)
- Expanded content on the steps of how to do a discourse analysis (Chapter 14)
- A *new* appendix entitled "Doing a Research Project" provides students with the skills and tools needed to design, complete, and write up a research project.

There are a number of new features that help make the text more student friendly:

- Learning objectives listed at the start of each chapter
- Chapter summaries at the end of each chapter

- Checklists to aid in the comprehension of subject matter
- New boxed features on a social research and the internet

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