

F O U R T H
E D I T I O N

Empirical Political Analysis

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Research
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Methods
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in
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Political
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Science

Jarol B. Manheim
Richard C. Rich

F O U R T H
E D I T I O N

Empirical Political Analysis

Research Methods
in Political Science

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 **Longman** *Publishers USA*

**Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods
in Political Science, fourth edition**

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Longman, 10 Bank Street, White Plains, N.Y. 10606

Associated companies:

Longman Group Ltd., London

Longman Cheshire Pty., Melbourne

Longman Paul Pty., Auckland

Copp Clark Longman Ltd., Toronto

*This book is dedicated
To Harvey and Norma,
who taught the basics,
And to Lila, Vivian, Regina, and Carrin*

Senior acquisitions editor: David M. Shapiro

Development editor: Susan Alkana

Production editor: Victoria Mifsud

Cover design: Joseph DePinho

Text art: Fine Line, Inc.

Production supervisor: Richard C. Bretan

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Manheim, Jarol B. Date.

Empirical political analysis : research methods in political
science / Jarol B. Manheim and Richard C. Rich ; with contributions
by Donna L. Bahry, Philip A. Schrodtt.—4th ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8013-1307-4

1. Political science—Research. I. Rich, Richard C. II. Title.

JA86.M35 1994

320'.072—dc20

94-9003

CIP

2345678910-MA-9897969594

Preface

In some ways, the preface is the most difficult part of a book to write. Although it appears first, it is generally written last, when authors are tired of looking at the manuscript and eager to be done with it. Moreover, the preface, if it is to be useful, requires that the authors provide some insight into the goals of the book, its rationale, and its basic conceptualization. Yet by the time they confront this final task, authors may be so immersed in the details of the effort that they have forgotten, or at the very least repressed, the grandiose schema with which they so impressed an editor many months before. For our part, we have never lost sight of these underlying tenets and directions and remain convinced of the utility of our approach to the topic.

Which brings us to the major point that belongs in any preface worthy of the name: a statement of the book's purpose. We both have taught research methods to undergraduate and graduate students alike who, whether by choice or by administrative fiat, found themselves enrolled in courses that examined the nuts and bolts of the research process. And we both, over the years, have searched for a text that was readable but not trite, comprehensive but not overwhelming, sophisticated but not coy, and functional but not pedantic. We looked high and low, far and wide, down every aisle and up every stack, but we never found a text that was, in the end, teachable. We were thus drawn to the conclusion that we had only one alternative—to write this book.

The result of our effort, as we hope you will discover, is a book that balances the competing demands placed upon the author of an introductory text. It is, we believe, clearly and appropriately organized to reflect the various stages of the research process from conceptualization of the research question to interpretation of the findings. Each chapter has been planned around a series of substantive questions, presented so as to provide examples of the importance or application of the topic, enhanced with a series of research exercises to give the student

practical insights into the issues raised, and rounded out with as list of key terms and an annotated bibliography suggesting both more advanced technical discussions of particular methods and places where these methods have been employed in the literature of political science.

In addition, the book is written at an appropriate level. We do not talk down to students, but we do write for them. We try to anticipate the questions a student might raise and to respond to them. We introduce necessary technical terms, which is, after all, a central function of a methods text, but we avoid unnecessary jargon. Specialized terms are defined in the glossary at the end of the book and are shown in **bold print** on their first significant use in context. We do not believe that one must be familiar with every technical term in order to grasp the essentials of the research process. We present detail and specify procedures, but we try to keep sight of the conceptual framework inherent in doing research.

Finally, and perhaps most important, this book is *comprehensive*. It introduces a wide variety of techniques, applications, and concerns important to political science research; their foci range from survey research to modeling, from the difficulties of comparative research to the opportunities of focus groups. And although we do not explore each of our topics to the depth that a specialized text might, we do provide sufficient insights into their workings and applications so as to meet the needs of the beginning researcher. We believe that having read this book, a student will both know and understand a great deal about the research process (not the least of which is how much more there is to learn), and we hope that most instructors will find that this is the only text they need to teach a complete methods course.

Despite these features, this book is not going to please everyone. Any undertaking of this sort requires the making of certain choices regarding what to include and how best to include it, and any such choices provide a potential source of disagreement. We genuinely appreciate the assistance of those anonymous reviewers who helped us through this task, both the first time through and in each revision, whether by agreeing with our choices (and thereby confirming our editor's wisdom in selecting them as reviewers in the first place), by disagreeing with our choices and arguing the merits of their cases persuasively (thereby improving the end product and earning our sincere gratitude), or by disagreeing with us but arguing the merits of their cases less than persuasively (and thereby reaffirming our own judgment). Without them the process would have been easier, but its result less satisfying.

In preparing this fourth edition, we especially want to thank Maira Liriano of George Washington University's Gelman Library, who helped us to keep our treatment of systematic bibliographic search in Chapter 3 up-to-date. Also, we would like to thank the following reviewers for their helpful comments:

Terri Susan Fine, University of Central Florida

Raymond E. Owen, University of Pittsburgh

Daniel E. Ponder, University of Colorado

Sharon D. Wright, University of Louisville

Adrian Clark, James Madison University

Philip R. Baumann, Moorhead State University

Kay Knickrehm, James Madison University
Aman Khan, Texas Tech University
Mark Wattier, Murray State University
Jasper M. LiCalzi, Jr., Temple University
Jack Corbett, Lewis & Clark College

We are grateful to the Literary Executor of the late Sir Ronald A. Fisher, F.R.S., to Dr. Frank Yates, F.R.S., and to Longman Group, Ltd., London, for permission to reprint Tables IV and VII from its book *Statistical Tables for Biological, Agricultural and Medical Research* (6th ed., 1974).

Finally, we want to thank our families, who, once again, have put up with our undoubtedly intolerable behavior as we came to terms with the fact that signing a publishing contract is not the same as turning in a completed manuscript.

With all of this assistance, the final product is ours. We are responsible for its weaknesses as for its strengths. We think it is a terrific book; we hope you will agree.

*No one is entitled to the truth. . . .
Only what the evidence shows
and nothing more.
E. Howard Hunt*

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Introduction

chapter 1

The Research Process

I have seen

A curious child, applying to his ear

The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell,

To which, in silence hushed, his very soul

Listened intensely; and his countenance soon

Brightened with joy, for from within were heard

Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed

Mysterious union with its native sea.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, *The Excursion*

Curiosity and necessity are the primary motives underlying human inquiry. Either we seek to understand the world around us for the sake of knowledge, or we seek to understand it so that we may protect or better our lot in it. Whichever is the case, our knowledge often brings with it, at least potentially, a recognition of certain ways to improve upon things as they are. To put that another way, the more we learn about our environment, social as well as physical, the better equipped we are to manipulate, or adapt to, it. This is as true of our knowledge of politics as it is of other fields. The key to understanding and altering our political environment is, most simply, knowing more about it.

But this simple idea of knowing raises two far less simple questions: *How* do we know? *How should we use* what we know? The first is a question of method, the second, one of ethics and preference. In the first instance we are interested in obtaining and structuring knowledge or understanding; in the second we are concerned with the moral obligations that accompany it. Both questions require the exercise of judgment and both draw upon our experience, but each demands its own distinct kind of intellectual effort.