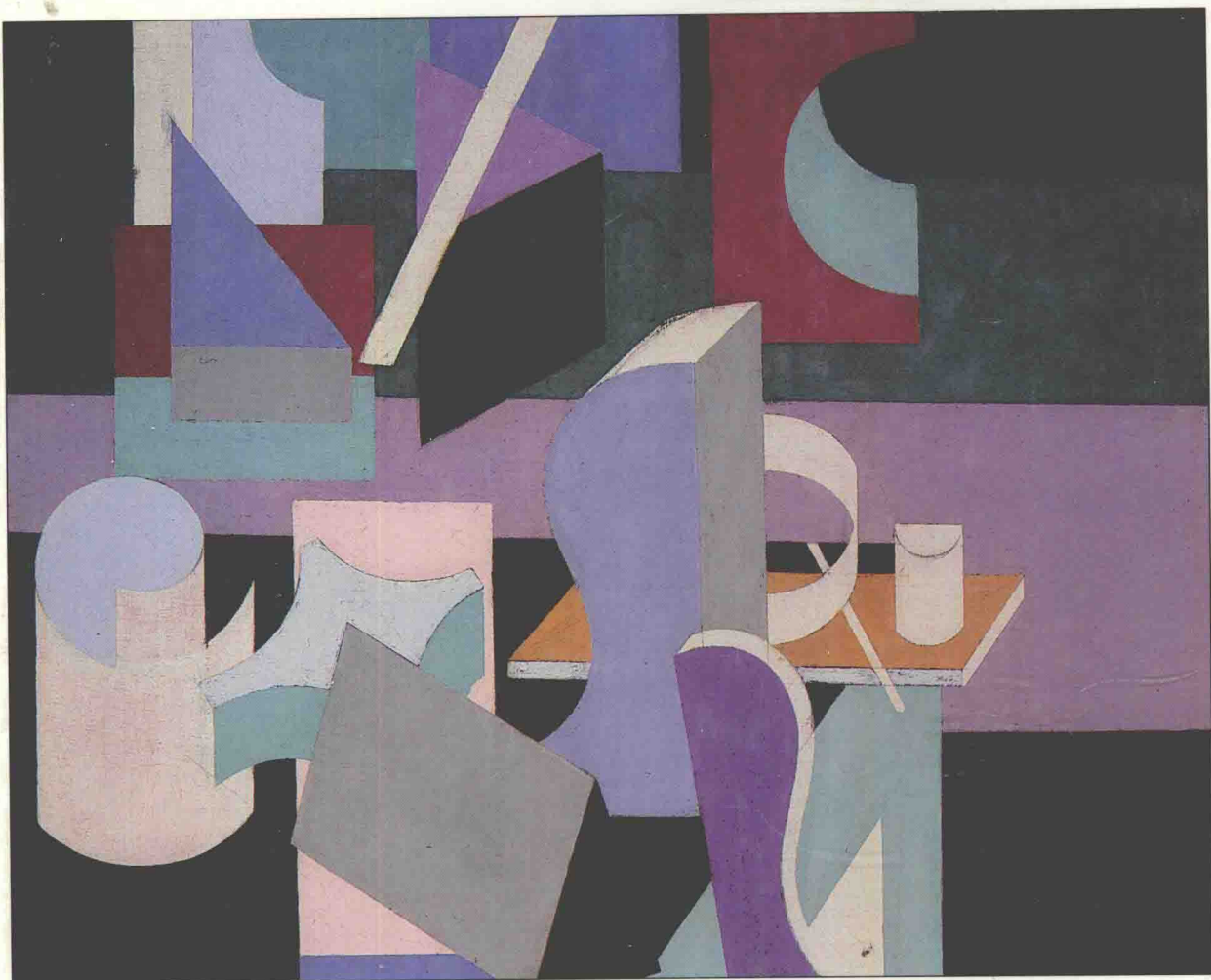


SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

FOURTH EDITION



RICHARD M. GRINNELL, JR.

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Richard M. Grinnell, Jr.

FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK, THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY



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DEDICATED TO JEAN-LUC PICARD

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- Figure 6.5: The Percentage of Passengers Who Buckled Up Over 58 Consecutive Observation Days. From B.A. Thyer & E.S. Geller (1987). The Buckle-Up Dashboard Sticker: An Effective Environmental Intervention for Safety Belt Promotion. *Environment and Behavior*, 19, 484-494. Reprinted by permission of Sage Publications, Inc.
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- Figure 6.8. Number of Successive Task Analysis Steps Completed. From N.C. Maeser & B.A. Thyer (in press). Teaching Boys with Severe Mental Retardation to Serve Themselves During Family-Style Meals. *Behavioral Residential Treatment*. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons.
- Figure 6.9. Daily Percentages of Safety Belt Use by Drivers Exiting the Call Street and Dogwood Way Parking Lots. From M. Williams, B.A. Thyer, J.S. Bailey, & D.F. Harrison (1989). Promoting Safety Belt Use with Traffic Signs and Prompters. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 22, 71-76. Reprinted by permission of the Society for the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, Inc.
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Preface

The favorable reception afforded the preceding three editions of *Social Work Research and Evaluation* has encouraged us to produce a fourth. As before, the text's emphasis is on how the goals of social work are furthered by the research process. Our belief is that research endeavors underly and support the profession of social work. Thus, research in social work is presented as more than just a way to solve problems, or add to our knowledge base, or guide practice, though it is all of these.

AUDIENCE

A majority of social work research instructors first cover basic research methodology (excluding statistics), and then apply this course content to a more advanced research course that specializes in single-system designs or program evaluation. Accordingly, we have designed this text to give students the basic methodological foundation they need in order to obtain the advanced knowledge and skills presented in these two research courses.

Social Work Research and Evaluation has been around for a long time and has been used by more yearly cohorts of students than any other social work research book. The text symbolizes tradition and change; it applies timeless issues of research design and measurement to changing methodologies and social concerns. It breaks some traditions and teaches readers to try new research methods without losing sight of the old.

The major change in this edition is that the text is designed for a one-semester (or quarter) course rather than a two-semester (or quarter) course. One aspect that remains the same is that *Social Work Research and Evaluation* is for upper-division undergraduate and beginning graduate social work students. It is assumed that students using it will have had at least one field placement and a practice methods course at either the undergraduate or graduate level. Experienced social work practitioners and researchers who may need to review material or learn new research approaches or methods will also find it useful.

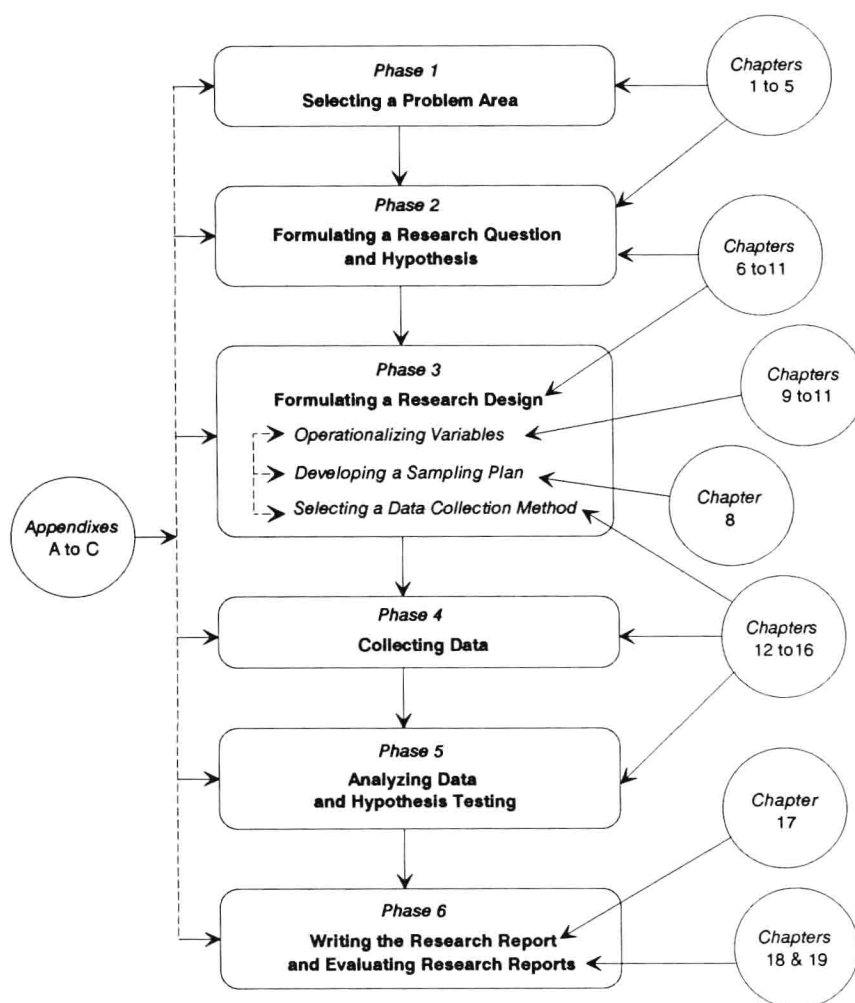


Figure A
Organization of Text

CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

Over the years we have received hundreds of comments from those who have used the first three editions. In this edition, we have used these suggestions to determine the specific topics covered, the depth to which the topics are covered, and the sequencing of chapters within the text.

The organization of the text reflects the research process as illustrated in Figure A. It begins with the foundations of social work research (Part 1), followed by research designs and sampling (Part 2), measurement (Part 3), data collection methods (Part 4), and writing and evaluating research reports (Part 5). In addition, the three appendixes present the process of reviewing, retrieving, and synthesizing the literature.

The left-hand side of Figure A presents the phases of the research proc-

ess, while the right-hand side indicates the chapters in this text that are relevant to each phase. A number of chapters are relevant to more than one phase of the research process, as indicated by the arrows on the right. The arrows on the left indicate that the phases are not in a fixed order but can be considered in different sequences.

As in the preceding editions, this is neither a brief primer in social work research nor a text intended for use as a reference manual. The fundamental organizing principle remains the same; namely, that the process social work practitioners use in their day-to-day practice activities is the same process social work researchers use in doing research studies. The two processes utilize the same generic, four-phase problem-solving method:

1. Problem identification, definition, and specification.
2. Generation of alternatives and selection of strategies for problem solution.
3. Implementation.
4. Evaluation and dissemination of findings.

STRENGTHS OF THE FOURTH EDITION

Particular strengths of this edition are highlighted below.

EXPERTISE OF CONTRIBUTORS

Collaborative efforts are certainly not uncommon in academia. In fact, most of the success this text has enjoyed can be attributed to the collaborative approach, which gives it its uncommon depth and broad appeal.

We have again secured the collaboration of an excellent and diverse group of social work research educators. The contributors know firsthand, from their own extensive teaching and practice experiences, what social work students need to know in relation to social work research. They have subjected themselves to a discipline uncommon in compendia—that is, writing in terms of what is most needed for an integrated basic research methods text, rather than in line with their own predilections. To further our efforts to produce a text that is consistent across chapters, the content has been edited extensively to maintain a common editorial approach and writing style.

LOGICAL AND FLEXIBLE PLAN

The chapters are organized in a way that makes good sense in teaching fundamental research methods to social work students. However, many other sequences that could be followed would make just as much sense. The chapters (and sections) in this book were consciously written to be independent of one another. They can be read out of the order in which they are presented, or they can be omitted. However, they will probably make the most sense to students if they are read in the sequence as presented in the text, because each builds upon the preceding one.

EXAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

The material presented is explained in terms of social work examples students can easily understand. Over 100 figures and tables have been used throughout to provide visual representations of the concepts presented in the text.

Many of the examples used center around women and minorities, in recognition of the need for social workers to be knowledgeable of their needs and problems. Special consideration has been given to the application of research methods to the study of questions concerning these groups.

RESEARCH ROLES

Few social work students in a research class will become active researchers—nor, necessarily, should they. But they will need to read and use research findings to engage in effective social work interventions, to solve social problems, or just to keep their knowledge current. In a profession such as ours, we are constantly bombarded with different and often conflicting ideas, claims, reports, and counterreports.

A majority of the students who read this text will consume research findings. Some will participate in social work research studies; a few will actually produce studies. All three of these roles are necessary in order to advance the profession's knowledge base. It is hoped that students will be encouraged to practice at least one of these three research roles.

THE RESEARCH APPROACH

There has been a tendency in social work education to teach as many different practice models as possible, in the hope that students will have the ability to integrate these models into their practice. In this text we have tried to stay away from this rationale and to concentrate instead on helping students learn one research approach well.

Our focus is on the scientific method as applied to social work research, sometimes referred to as the positivistic approach or the problem-solving method. We believe that students learn research methodology best when they fully understand the positivistic approach to social work research and its use in the generation of knowledge. After mastering this approach, they can proceed to learn the other methods of obtaining knowledge through the research process.

The principal alternative to the positivistic approach to social work research is the naturalistic approach, which is discussed in Chapter 4 and other places throughout the text. We want to give students a balanced perspective which includes some familiarity with the naturalistic approach as well as a sound grasp of the positivistic approach. It is our view that contemporary social work research should be pluralistic in its approach.

THE APPENDIXES

The three appendixes are particularly unique to a social work research text in that they thoroughly detail how a student can review, retrieve, and synthesize the literature—essential activities in all six phases of the research process as presented in Figure A. They are included as appendixes because they overarch the entire research process from problem identification and conceptualization to report writing. It is our intention to show students, via the appendixes, that the proper use of the professional literature is an extremely important skill to master when doing a research study.

STUDENT STUDY GUIDE

An inexpensive *Student Study Guide* is available with this edition (Krysiak, Hoffart, & Grinnell, F. E. Peacock Publishers, 1993). Its major goal is to aid the student's understanding of basic research methodology and its applications to social work problems.

ORGANIZATION

To accomplish this goal, the *Guide* is organized into three parts: exercises, sample research studies, and standardized measurements.

Exercises

Part One contains 19 sets of exercises which correspond directly to the 19 chapters in this text. The exercises are intended to provide students with the opportunity to apply the basic concepts presented to actual research studies.

To complement a variety of student learning styles, three types of exercises are provided: self-study exercises, which require an individual, in-depth examination of each chapter; group exercises, which facilitate class and group discussion; and library exercises, which encourage exploration of additional literature in an effort to strengthen information retrieval skills. The exercises are presented at varying levels of abstraction and require creative, thoughtful input. For each set of exercises, students are required to refer to at least 1 of the 12 sample research studies in Part Two.

Sample Research Studies

Part Two emphasizes the practical application of social work research and evaluation by providing a point of reference for the research process as explained in the text. The 12 studies focus on the development of knowledge in the social work profession. They were specifically chosen to demonstrate the basic concepts presented in the text (e.g., the problem formulation process, ethical considerations, research designs, sampling procedures, and measurement) in addition to the various types of data collection and analysis (observations, surveys, secondary analyses, and content analyses).

Standardized Measurements

Part Three contains 10 standardized measurement scales developed by Walter W. Hudson. They are accompanied by a brief introduction detailing their use in social work research and practice. They have been included to further students' understanding of how measurement is used in the positivistic research process.

A FINAL WORD

Some social work research instructors have expressed disappointment that several of the chapters in the early editions have been deleted. In general, chapters were dropped because they were not being assigned as required reading in a majority of research courses, and it was necessary to make room for new ideas and developments. The work of former contributors is still readily available in many copies of the preceding editions, however.

The field of research in social work is continuing to grow and develop. We believe this edition will contribute to that growth. A fifth edition is anticipated, and suggestions for it are more than welcome.

Richard M. Grinnell, Jr.

PART ONE

The social work research process is a scientific effort. It rests on an established knowledge base, in which questions about social reality are specified and hypotheses are formulated to test this reality. The answers and conclusions arrived at through this process continuously add to the sum of knowledge of social work theory and practice.

Part One establishes the foundations of this process. Basic terms and ideas are introduced in Chapter 1, and Chapter 2 describes how the researcher initiates a study by moving from a general problem area to a research question and then to a hypothesis that can be tested. The positivistic research approach, the basis for discussion in much of this text, is examined in Chapter 3, and the principal alternative, the naturalistic research approach, is presented in Chapter 4. A fundamental consideration in conducting social work research is discussed in Chapter 5, which presents ethical guidelines to be followed in order to avoid harming research participants in any way.

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