



THE PRACTICE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

FIFTH EDITION

EARL BABBIE

The Practice of Social Research

Fifth Edition

Earl Babbie

**Wadsworth
Publishing
Company**

Belmont, California
A Division of Wadsworth, Inc.

Practicing Social Research, 5th Edition, by
Earl Babbie and Theodore C. Wagenaar, guided
activities to accompany this textbook, is
available from your bookstore.

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Belmont, California 94002, a division of Wadsworth, Inc.

Printed in the United States of America 34

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10—93 92 91 90 89

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Babbie, Earl R.

The practice of social research / Earl Babbie.—5th ed.

p. cm.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-534-09726-X

1. Social sciences—Research. 2. Social sciences—Methodology.

I. Title.

H62.B2 1989

300'.72—dc19

88-11771

CIP

Dedication

Georg von Békésy
1899–1972

Werner Erhard

*Also by Earl Babbie
and available from
Wadsworth Publishing Company:*

Social Research for Consumers

Survey Research Methods

Observing Ourselves: Essays in Social Research

Research Methods for Social Work (with Allen Rubin)

The Sociological Spirit: Critical Essays in a Critical Science

Preface

In 1968, I began teaching social research methods for the first time—at the University of Hawaii. Actually, the course focused specifically on survey research methods, and I had only six students in the class that first semester. It was my first real teaching experience, and the small class size didn't keep me from sitting behind a desk on a platform down front, while the students scattered themselves around the large lecture hall.

As the semester progressed, I became more relaxed as a teacher, came to like and appreciate my students, and eventually moved down from the platform at the head of the lecture hall. Before long, in fact, we began meeting in my office, where I could grab and loan books from my own library as their relevance occurred to me during class meetings. (By the way, if any of those first six students are reading this, would you please return my books?)

The problem that continued nagging me in the course, however, was the lack of a good textbook on survey research. I ended up using one published by a British researcher, but the students had problems with the strange brand of English used in the text, and I found myself unhappy with the way various topics were covered—or weren't covered at all, in some cases.

The other textbooks I had considered, however, seemed to fall into one of two groups. Some books presented the theoretical logic of research methods in such abstract terms that I didn't think students would be able to apply any of the general principles in the practical, real world of "doing" research. The other books, however, were just the opposite. Often termed "cookbooks," they presented detailed, step-by-step instructions on how to conduct a survey. Unfortunately, that latter approach only prepared students to conduct surveys very much like the one described by the authors. Neither the abstract nor the "cookbook" approach seemed really useful to students—nor to their instructors.

One day I found myself doodling the table of contents for the ideal research methods textbook, which I entitled *A Survey Research Cookbook and Other Fables*. It was organized around three principles:

1. Understanding the *theoretical* principles on which scientific research was based.
2. Seeing how those principles were reflected in the established techniques for *doing* research.
3. Thereby being prepared to make appropriate *compromises* whenever field

conditions didn't permit the routine application of established techniques.

The next day, I received an unexpected letter from the sociology editor at Wadsworth, asking if I would be interested in writing a textbook on survey research methods. Enclosing a table of contents by return mail, I said I would, and I was soon at work on my first textbook.

*Survey Research Methods** was published in 1973. We immediately discovered some good news, some bad news, and some additional good news. The first good news was that all the survey research instructors seemed to love the book, and it seemed as though our book was being used in virtually every survey research course in the country. The bad news was that there weren't all that many survey research courses.

The final good news, however, was that many instructors who taught more general social research courses—covering survey research alongside other research methods—were inclined to use our book and supplement it with other books dealing with field research, experiments, and so on. While adjusting to our specialized book, however, many instructors suggested that Wadsworth have “that same guy” write a more general social research text.

By that time, Steve Rutter was sociology editor at Wadsworth, and we began working together to design a general social research textbook that would serve the needs of students and instructors. Although it's probably polite for an author to speak of having a partnership with an editor, the partnership Steve and I forged was as real

and solid as any profound friendship I've had in life.

One of Steve's particular jobs in the partnership was to sample the needs, opinions, and practices of instructors around the country. The Preface of the first edition of *The Practice of Social Research* (1975) acknowledged the assistance of a dozen social research instructors from California to Florida. The resulting book, then, was a collaboration in a very real sense, even though only my name was on the cover, and I was ultimately responsible for it.

The Practice of Social Research was an immediate success. It was initially written for sociology courses, but subsequent editions have been increasingly used in fields such as political science, social work, marketing research, and so forth. Moreover, it is being used by teachers and researchers in numerous countries around the world—including China and the USSR.

Basic Approach

I've laid out this lengthy history of the book for a couple of reasons. First, when I was a student, I suppose I thought of textbooks kind of like I thought about government buildings: They were just *there*. I never really thought about them being written by human beings. I certainly never thought about textbooks *evolving*: being updated, getting better, having *errors* corrected. As a student, I would have been horrified by the thought that any of my textbooks might contain mistakes!

Second, pointing to the evolution of the book sets the stage for a preview of the changes that have gone into this fifth edition. As with previous revisions, changes

*So much for *A Survey Research Cookbook and Other Fables*. It was shipped off to the graveyard of clever book titles.

have been prompted by several factors. For example:

- Social research technology and practices are continually changing and require that the book be updated to remain current and useful.
- In my own teaching, I frequently find improved ways for presenting standard materials.
- Colleagues frequently share their ideas for ways of teaching specific topics. Some of these appear as boxed inserts in the book.
- Both students and instructors often suggest that various topics be reorganized, expanded, clarified, shrunk, or—gasp—deleted.

The Fifth Edition

Revising a textbook such as this is a humbling experience. No matter how good it seems to be, there is no end of ideas about how it could be improved. And unfortunately, people often disagree about what's needed. For example, over the years, some instructors have felt there should be an expanded coverage of statistics, and others have asked that the discussion of statistics be eliminated altogether.

By the same token, some instructors have felt strongly that the discussion of research ethics should be put earlier in the book to establish an ethical context for the discussions of research techniques. Others have felt ethics should be discussed later on, after students are more familiar with the techniques that must be practiced ethically. Initially, I had it early in the book, moving it farther back in response to instructors' suggestions. No

sooner was it moved, than I began hearing from the early-on bloc.

I've come to the conclusion that there is no right or wrong position in disagreements such as these. There are only differences in what works best for different instructors and different academic settings. My purpose has been to find solutions that work best for most.

With that in mind, I'd like to mention some of the changes that distinguish this edition from the previous one. If you are an instructor who has worked with the fourth edition, this discussion will alert you to changes that might otherwise come as a surprise. If you are a student, you may find this discussion attunes you to some of the book's main themes.

Features of the New Edition

Chapter 1: Human Inquiry and Science

This edition casts methods as one of three parts of social science: theory-methods-statistics. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on theory, Chapter 17 deals with statistics, and the remainder of the book is about *methods*: the logic and skills that let the researcher move from theory to create data for statistical analysis.

Some new graphic figures offer an overview of research process and clarify the notions of variables and attributes.

Chapter 2: Theory and Research As indicated above, the fifth edition deals with social theory in more depth than before, and a new section on the motivations for research elaborates on the various ways that theory and research relate to each other.

I've described some of my own recent research on the subject of trance-chan-

neling. I think students will find this interesting, as well as finding an opportunity to recognize our implicit paradigms.

I tried a new technique for contrasting and distinguishing deductive and inductive logical models, illustrating the two approaches using the same concepts and data.

Chapter 3: The Nature of Causation A number of examples of illogical reasoning involving AIDS, peace, fluoridation, and more demonstrate the day-to-day importance of clear thinking.

Chapter 4: Research Design A section on the *application* of research adds a new, and important, step in the overall research process.

At the other end of the research process, there is also a new section on the research proposal.

Chapter 5: Conceptualization and Measurement I've said more on the reliability of measures, including the split-half method of reliability checking and the use of established measures.

Chapter 6: Operationalization A new box, *Double-Barreled and Beyond*, illustrates problematic questionnaire item construction in established and respected public opinion polls.

In response to requests from many instructors, I have moved the section on questionnaire construction here from Chapter 9 (on survey research).

Chapter 7: The Logic of Sampling This is usually the hardest chapter for students, so I've devised a new series of diagrams to illustrate the logic and techniques of sampling. One of the series deals with weighting, a particularly tricky concept for some students.

There is an expanded critique of "call-in polls."

A new box, *Sampling Santa's Friends*, deals with sampling young children.

Chapter 8: Experiments I've replaced the extended illustration of experimentation at the end of the chapter, examining the growing body of research on "expectation states theory." This offers more typical examples of experimentation in the social sciences than the earlier example of the "hard-to-get-woman" study, and none of the new studies cited involved the hiring of prostitutes, resolving a concern some instructors expressed.

Chapter 9: Survey Research Telephone interviewing has been given an expanded treatment in this edition—parallel with self-administered studies and face-to-face interviewing—with an updated and more extensive discussion of CATI systems.

Chapter 10: Field Research There is a new box on "experience sampling," particularly used in communications research.

I've had more to say about the use of computers in field research and have discussed programs for analyzing field notes.

Chapter 13: Quantifying Data This chapter has been once again updated to reflect new technological developments—in both hardware and software. I've swallowed hard and dropped some more of the discussions of earlier technologies: those I was trained in as a graduate student.

I've illustrated the kind of codebook used in microcomputer data files and have described the data-entry and data-cleaning processes typical when microcomputers are used. This ties in with the earlier discussion of CATI systems.

Chapter 14: Elementary Analyses In this edition, I've added a new section on "Collapsing Response Categories." I don't know that any textbook has ever discussed this very common but unexplicated technique. New tables illustrate it, and I think it will clear up some confusion for students.

There is also a new section on handling "don't know" responses. Like the collapsing of categories, this is something all practicing researchers deal with all the time, but it's seldom spelled out for students.

Chapter 15: Indexes, Scales, and Typologies Here I want to comment on something I haven't changed, despite requests from some instructors. This discussion of composite measures is, as I indicate, a continuation of the discussion of *measurement* launched in Chapters 5 and 6. Some instructors have requested that this chapter be moved forward, to follow directly the discussions of conceptualization and operationalization.

I haven't done that in this edition, feeling that students must learn the logic and techniques of table construction, techniques used in the construction of composite measures.

Chapter 17: Social Statistics I have reduced the space devoted to advanced multivariate techniques (Chapter 18 of the fourth edition) and included those discussions in this chapter. As before, my purpose is to give students a sampling of a few of the advanced techniques used by social scientists, without attempting to train them in the use of such techniques.

Chapter 18: The Ethics and Politics of Social Research Methods instructors are of two minds as to the placement of this chapter within the book, and my own thinking has changed over the years. The

first edition of the book had an appendix on research ethics, despite objections by some reviewers that the topic did not belong in a book on research methodology. In the second edition, I moved the discussion into the book proper (as Chapter 3). In my own teaching experience and that of many colleagues, students didn't seem to appreciate the importance of the ethical dimension until after they had learned something about the specific techniques for research, so in the third edition the chapter—expanded to include politics—was moved to the end of the book.

In this edition, I have kept the discussion of ethics and politics near the end of the book, as in the third and fourth, for the reasons mentioned above. I do know that some instructors prefer to assign the chapter earlier in the course, so I've written it in such a way that students can understand it without having read the earlier chapters.

Chapter 19: The Uses of Social Research

In response to suggestions from instructors, this new chapter wraps up our discussion of social research with some contextual review. It begins by reviewing the theory-research-statistics framework laid out in Chapter 1. This is followed by a discussion of *Everyday Uses of Social Research Skills*, showing students how some of what they've learned applies to nonresearch aspects of their lives.

The chapter concludes with *A Consumer's Guide to Social Research*, which reviews main topics of the book, giving questions that should be asked in reading the research reports that appear in the newspapers and elsewhere.

Appendixes Appendix A on *Using the Library* has been upgraded to reflect advances in technology, particularly com-

puter searching in Sociological Abstracts, which is illustrated.

Appendix B on *The Research Report* contains a new section on *plagiarism* with illustrations of what's acceptable and what's not.

A *Learner's Guide to SPSS^X* in Appendix H has been revised and adapted to microcomputer versions. General Social Survey data are now used as illustrations.

All in all, I am very pleased with this new edition of *The Practice of Social Research*. I think it's the best edition yet, and I hope you will find it useful to you, whether you are a student or an instructor. Finally, I would be interested in any suggestions you might have for improving the book further. Please write to me in care of Wadsworth Publishing Company, 10 Davis Drive, Belmont, CA 94002.

Supplements

Practicing Social Research This student study guide and workbook Ted Wagenaar and I have prepared continues to be a mainstay in my own teaching. The students tell me they use it heavily as a review of the text, and I count the exercises as half their grade in the course. I specify a certain number of points for each exercise—depending on how hard it is and how much I want them to do it—and give a deadline for each exercise, typically right after we've covered the materials in class. Most exercises rate between 5 and 25 points.

Finally, I specify the total number of points that will rate an A on the exercises, the range of points representing a B, and so forth. From there on, it's up to the students. They can do whichever exercises they want and as many as they want, as

long as they complete each by its deadline. Every exercise they submit gets them some fraction of the maximum points assigned to it. The total number of points they earn from exercises counts for half their grade in the course. I end up with a fair amount of grading during the course, but my experience is that those who do the exercises also do better on exams and papers.

In this edition, Ted and I have once again sorted through the exercises and added new ones that we've created in our own teaching or heard about from colleagues. In particular, we have added more exercises for students who have access to SPSS^X, though we've kept plenty for those who don't.

Data Disk Over the years, we have sought to provide up-to-date computer—and particularly, microcomputer—support for students and instructors. Because there are now many excellent programs for analyzing data, we have provided data to be used with those programs. Specifically, we are providing data from the National Opinion Research Center's *General Social Survey*, offering students a variety of data from 1,000 respondents around the country in 1976 and 1986.

Instructor's Manual As with past editions, Margaret Jendrek has prepared an excellent instructor's manual to assist in the preparation of examinations. In addition to the usual multiple-choice, true-false, and essay questions, the manual provides resources for lecture planning as well as giving suggested answers for some of the student problems in the *Study Guide*. While students may not appreciate examinations as a general principle, I know that they benefit from the clarity that Marty brings to that task.

Acknowledgments

It would be impossible to acknowledge adequately all the people who have been influential in forming this book. My earlier methods text, *Survey Research Methods*, was dedicated to Samuel Stouffer, Paul Lazarsfeld, and Charles Glock. I would like to state again the acknowledgment of my debt to them.

Several colleagues were acknowledged for their comments during the writing of the first, second, and third editions of this book, and I would like to repeat my thanks to them here. Though revised, the present book still reflects their contributions. Many other colleagues were of assistance in the revision of the book. I particularly want to thank the instructors who reviewed the manuscript of this edition and made helpful suggestions: Walter Carroll, Bridgewater State University; Esther N. Chow, The American University; Sheila Cordray, Oregon State University; Larry Crisler, Millikin University; John Hedderson, University of Texas at El Paso; Barbara Keating, Mankato State University; Michael R. Leming, St. Olaf College; Kathleen McKinney, Illinois State University; Ben Nefzger, Augustana College; Brian Ross, University of San Francisco; Douglas Snyder, Bowie State College; Sidney M. Stahl, Purdue University;

Kathleen Tiemann, Mercer University; and Theodore C. Wagenaar, Miami University.

The book, both in its present form and in its earlier editions, is also very much a product of my relationship with Steve Rutter, now Vice-President of Editorial Acquisitions at Wadsworth Publishing Company. Steve is truly a master at his craft, and working with him for more than a decade has been one of the special joys of my life as an author. The book's publication has also been greatly assisted by the efforts and skills of four other people at Wadsworth: Sheryl Fullerton, sociology editor; Sharon McNally, Assistant Editor; Jerilyn Emori, Production Editor; and Carolyn Deacy, Managing Designer.

Ted Wagenaar has contributed extensively to this book. Ted and I co-author the accompanying workbook, *Practicing Social Research*, but that's only the tip of the iceberg. Ted is a cherished colleague, welcomed critic, good friend, and altogether decent human being. I am grateful also for the SPSS^X appendix prepared by Jeffrey M. Jacques, Florida A&M University.

I want to thank Eve Fielder, field director of UCLA's Survey Research Center, for bringing me up to date on

CATI techniques; Stephanie Vance was a supportive research assistant; and Joan Noguera supported my work in tangible and intangible ways too numerous to list.

I want to acknowledge a special debt to my friend and colleague Hanan Selvin. Hanan never fails to stimulate and inspire me both in research methods and in life. I particularly honor Hanan's commitment to the responsible use of language and have enjoyed the nits we've picked together.

My wife, Sheila, has contributed to this book in more ways than can be stated. Her insight and support take me always to the horizon of my purpose and allow me to look beyond it.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this book on social research to two people who are not regarded as social scientists. The first is Georg von Bekesy, a distinguished physiologist whom I met about four years before his death in 1972. Professor von Bekesy was that rare Renaissance man: a person interested in and insightful about everything, winner of the 1961 Nobel Prize in Medicine-Physiology, possessor of a dozen or so doctorates and fluent in as many languages, an expert in fine art, the gentlest of people, and the *compleat* scientist.

Despite our short acquaintance, Professor von Bekesy gave me a feeling for

science that has affected my own research and the contents and spirit of this book. He provided a model of the scientist intent on using science to improve the quality of life on the planet and contribute to the lives of others.

The second dedication is to Werner Erhard, founder of the est training, the Hunger Project, the Holiday Project, and other organizations dedicated to empowering individuals to improve the quality of life on the planet. While Werner is not a scientist in the customary meaning of that term, he has a profound grasp and appreciation of science that has greatly enhanced the clarity and enthusiasm that I have been able to bring to my writing. Like von Bekesy, Werner offers a model of service to others as a way of being more than just a passenger on Spaceship Earth. He has inspired me to view my teaching and textbook writing in the context of service to others and making a difference in the world.

In this same spirit, I offer this book to you: to support you in learning the skills and logic of social research, to share the challenge and the excitement of it with you, and to encourage you to use what you learn to make your own contribution to the quality of life on your planet.

Prologue

The Importance of Social Research

In many ways, the twentieth century hasn't been one of our better periods. Except for the relatively carefree twenties, we've moved from World War I to the Great Depression to World War II to the Cold War and its threat of thermonuclear holocaust to Vietnam and on to the current concerns over the environmental destruction of our planet. Many sage observers have written about the insecurity and malaise of people who grew up during portions of this century.

A case could be made that these are not the best of times. At the same time, this period in history has seen countless individual efforts and social movements aimed at making the world work. Much of the commitment to creating humane social affairs has arisen on college campuses, and perhaps you find that commitment in yourself.

As you look at the flow of events in the world around you, if you want to make a significant contribution to the lives of future generations, you have a broad range of choices available to you. Environmental problems are many and varied. Prejudice and discrimination are with us still, and there are several different targets for you to focus your attention on. There is, in short, no end of the ways in which you could demonstrate to

yourself that your life matters, that you make a difference.

Given all the things you could choose from—things that really *matter*—why should you spend your time learning social research methods? I want to address that question at the start, since I'm going to suggest that you devote some of your time and attention to learning about such things as social theory, sampling, interviewing, experiments, computers, and so forth—things that can seem pretty distant from solving the world's pressing problems. The point I'll make in the following few pages is that social science is not only relevant to the kinds of major problems I've just listed, but it holds *the* answers to them.

Many of the *big* problems we've faced and still face in this century have been the result of technology. The threat of nuclear war is an example. Not unreasonably, therefore, we have tended to look to technology and the technologists for solutions to those problems. Unfortunately, every technological solution so far has turned out to be a new problem. At the beginning of this century, for example, many people worried about the danger of horse manure piling up continually higher and higher in city streets. That problem was averted, through technol-

ogy, with the invention of the automobile. Now, no one worries about manure in the streets; instead we worry about a new and deadlier kind of pollutant in the air we breathe.

Similarly, we have attempted to avoid nuclear attack by building better bombs and missiles of our own—so that no enemy would dare attack. But that hasn't worked either. Since our potential enemies operate on the same reasoning that we do, they too have built ever bigger and more powerful weapons. There is no technological end in sight for the escalating nuclear weapons race.

The simple fact is that technology alone will never save us. It will never make the world work. You and I are the only ones who can do that. The only real solutions lie in the ways we organize and run our social affairs. That becomes evident when you look at all the social problems that persist today despite the clear presence of viable, technological solutions.

Overpopulation, for example, is a pressing problem in the world today. The number of people currently living on earth is severely taxing our planet's life support systems, and this number is rapidly increasing year after year. If you study the matter, however, you'll find that we already possess all the technological developments we need to stem population growth. It is technologically possible and feasible for us to stop population growth on the planet at whatever limit we want. Yet, overpopulation worsens each year.

Clearly, the solution to overpopulation is a social one. The causes of population growth lie in the norms, values, and customs that make up organized social life, and that is where the solutions are hidden. Ultimately, only social science can save us from overpopulation.

Or consider the problem of starvation on the planet. Each year, some 15 million people die as a consequence of starvation. That amounts to 28 people a minute, every minute of every day, and 21 of them are children. Virtually everyone would agree that this situation is deplorable. All would prefer it otherwise. We tolerate this level of starvation on the planet in the belief that it is currently inevitable. Perhaps one day someone will invent a method of producing food that will defeat starvation once and for all.

When you study the issue of starvation in the world, however, you learn some astounding facts. First, you learn that the earth currently produces more than enough food to feed everyone without requiring sacrifices from those of us who are eating well. Moreover, this level of production does not even take account of farm programs that pay farmers *not* to plant and produce all the food they could.

Second, you learn that there are carefully worked out and tested methods for ending starvation. In fact, since World War II, more than thirty countries have actually taken on and ended their own problem of starvation. Some did it through food distribution programs. Others focused on land reform. Some collectivized; others developed agribusiness. Many applied the advances of the Green Revolution. Taken together, these many proven solutions make it possible to totally eliminate starvation on the planet. Still, 15 million die each year.

Why haven't we ended starvation? The answer, again, lies in the organization and operation of our social life. New developments in food production will not end starvation any more than earlier ones have. People will continue starving on this planet until we are able to *mas-*

ter our social affairs rather than being enslaved by them.

Possibly, the problems of over-population and starvation may seem distant to you, occurring somewhere “over there,” on the other side of the globe. To save space, let me skip over the conclusion, increasingly reached, that there is no “over there” anymore: that there is only “over here” in today’s world.

Regardless of how you view world problems, there is no end of social problems undeniably in your own back yard—possibly even in your front yard: crime in the streets, inflation, unemployment, homelessness, cheating in government and business, child abuse, prejudice and discrimination, pollution, drug abuse, increased taxes, and reduced public services are but a few.

Problems such as these—and hundreds more—cannot be dismissed as being “over there.” They exist where you live. And problems like these are unlikely to be solved by technology. You and I are the only ones who can solve them. If we don’t take on the challenge, no one will. The question is whether you and I will solve our social problems before they create a final solution for us. So, let’s get on with it.

We can’t solve our social problems until we understand how they come about and persist. Social science research offers a way of examining and understanding the operation of human social affairs. It provides points of view and technical procedures that uncover things that would otherwise escape our awareness. Often, as the cliché goes, things are not what they seem, and social science research can make that clear. One example ought to illustrate this fact.

For years, the general issue of race relations in America has often touched

on the special problems facing the black American family. Most have agreed that the black family was matriarchal, that is, dominated by the wife/mother. The white family, by contrast, has been widely recognized as egalitarian with patriarchal traces. The matriarchal pattern of the black family has been seen as a special barrier to the achievement of equality by blacks in America. Indeed, the controversial Moynihan Report stressed the need for changes in the black family.

Several surveys have supported the conclusion that the black family was matriarchal. Asked who made the most important decisions in their families when they were growing up, black respondents in the survey were most likely to say their mothers did. The majority said their mothers exercised more power in the family than their fathers did. Similarly, most black adults surveyed have reported that the wives in their own families make most of the important decisions. The pattern of black matriarchy has seemed clear and consistent.

This documented pattern has produced considerable discussion and disagreement over the years. Political conservatives have often cited it as evidence of an inherent weakness in the character of black males. How, they have asked, can blacks expect to achieve equality when the men are so weak and submissive? Such apparent character flaws, then, have been used for years to explain and justify why blacks have fared so badly in American society.

From a liberal point of view, the facts have been explained quite differently. The pattern of matriarchy has been explained as a product of slavery—when families were forcibly separated—and of modern welfare laws that often force

husbands/fathers to desert their families as the only means of obtaining government assistance for them.

These two ideological points of view present the same facts quite differently, then, and the years of debate have not significantly altered either points of view or facts. In 1969, however, two sociologists took a look at the matter from a totally different point of view. What they did exemplifies the social scientific approach, and what they discovered demonstrates the value of that approach.

Herbert Hyman and John Shelton Reed began by confirming that the surveys did indeed suggest a matriarchal pattern in the black American family.* As expected, they found consistent reports from blacks that wives/mothers were more powerful in family life than husbands/fathers. Then they looked at something others had overlooked: the answers given by *white respondents* in the same surveys. What do you suppose they discovered? *The answers given by white men and women were the same as those given by blacks!* Thus, Hyman and Reed concluded that if the black family is a matriarchy, so is the white family in America. Women seem to dominate white families to the same degree that they seem to dominate black ones. Thus, if black men are weak and submissive through some sort of character defect, then the same must be said of white men.

Many of the things social scientists study—including all the social problems we intend to solve—are a source of deep emotion and firm conviction for people generally. The depth of feeling and firmness of position in such cases makes effective inquiry into the facts difficult at best. All too often, we only manage to confirm our initial prejudices. The special value of social science research methods is that they offer a way of addressing such issues with logical and observational rigor. They let us pierce through our personal viewpoints and get a look at the world that lies beyond our normal vision. And it is that “world beyond” that holds the solutions to the social problems we face today.

At a time of increased depression and disillusionment, we are tempted daily to retreat from confronting social problems into the concerns of an ever-narrowed self-interest, despite the cost of becoming insignificant specks of protoplasm on a dust ball whirling through space. Social science research offers an opportunity to take on those problems and discover the experience of making a difference after all. The choice is yours, and I invite you to take on the challenge. Your instructor and I would like to share the excitement of social science with you.

*“Black Matriarchy Reconsidered: Evidence from Secondary Analysis of Sample Surveys,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 33 (1969), pp. 346–354.