

Investigating the SOCIAL WORLD

5th Edition

The Process and Practice of Research



RUSSELL K. SCHUTT

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University of Massachusetts, Boston

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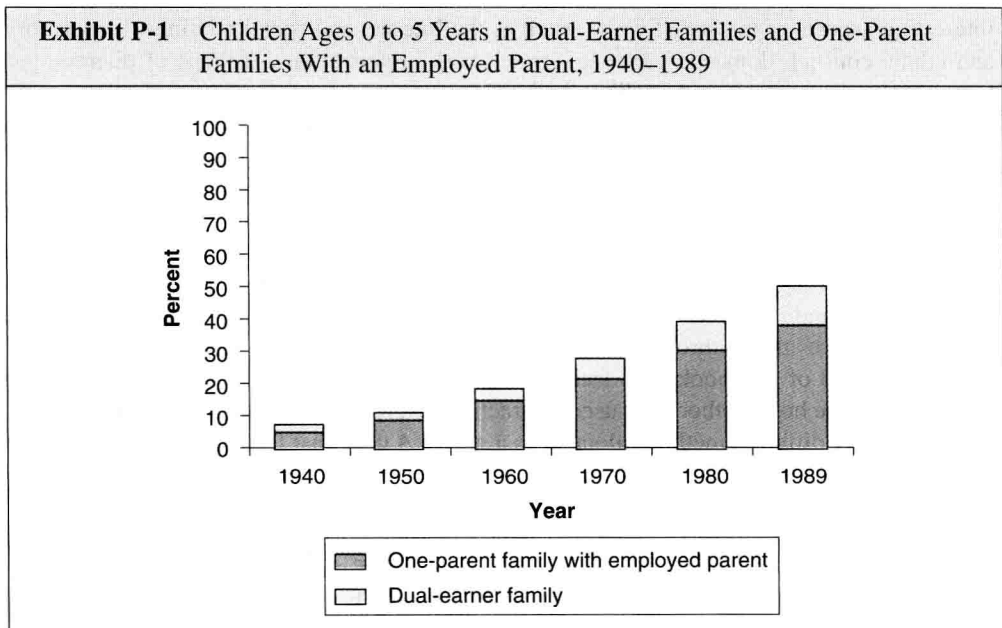
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About the Author

Russell K. Schutt, Ph.D., is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Graduate Program in Applied Sociology at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and Lecturer on Sociology in the Department of Psychiatry (Beth Israel-Deaconess Medical Center) at the Harvard Medical School. He completed his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. (1977) degrees at the University of Illinois at Chicago and was a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Sociology of Social Control Training Program at Yale University (1977–1979). In addition to five editions of *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*, two editions of a coauthored brief edition of this text (with Dan Chambliss), and two coauthored specialized versions—for the fields of social work (with Ray Engel) and criminal justice (with Ronet Bachman)—he is the author of *Organization in a Changing Environment*, coeditor (with Stephanie Hartwell) of *The Organizational Response to Social Problems*, and coauthor (with Gerald Garrett) of *Responding to the Homeless: Policy and Practice*. He has authored and coauthored numerous journal articles, book chapters, and research reports on homelessness, mental health, organizations, law, and teaching research methods. He recently directed a large translational research project at the Harvard Medical School for the Women's Health Network program of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. His current research focuses on social factors that shape the impact of housing, employment, and services for severely mentally ill persons and on the service preferences of homeless persons and service personnel. He has also studied influences on well-being, satisfaction, and cognitive functioning; processes of organizational change and the delivery of case management; decision making in juvenile justice and in union admissions; political participation; media representations of mental illness; and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Preface

There is no more important social relationship than that between parents and young children, so it is no surprise that changing employment and child-rearing patterns in recent decades have generated a great deal of attention. Donald J. Hernandez, chief of the Marriage and Family Statistics Branch of the U.S. Bureau of the Census, summarized the issues in a 1995 article, “Changing Demographics: Past and Future Demands for Early Childhood Programs.” Exhibit P-1 displays a key piece of evidence about one of these issues: the decline in parental availability for child care. The exhibit shows that from 1940 to 1989, there was a fourfold increase in the percentage of children ages 0 to 5 years old who lived in dual-earner families or one-parent families with an employed parent. And it is a global trend (Engle 2000; *OECD Observer* 2003).



Source: Hernandez 1995:147.

So is it safe to conclude, as many have, that parents are now investing less in rearing their children? Sociologists Liana C. Sayer, Suzanne M. Bianchi, and John P. Robinson (2004:22) set out to investigate this critical question with data from special time diaries for parents that were collected over a 30-year period. What they found may surprise you: Although parents are indeed working more, it appears that they have adjusted how they spend their time so that they are now actually spending more time with their children. Of course this is only part of the picture—there are many related issues to consider and important questions about the evidence to ask. If you're interested, you might want to pick up a copy of the Sayer et al. article and begin to delve a bit deeper. But this research provides a good starting point for introducing this text on research methods, for it illustrates both how research methods help us to understand pressing social questions and why our superficial impressions of social processes can be wrong: Neither our own limited perceptions nor a few facts gleaned from even reputable sources provide us with a trustworthy basis for understanding the social world. We need systematic methods for investigating our social world that enable us to chart our course through the passions of the moment and to see beyond our own personal experience.

TEACHING AND LEARNING GOALS

If you see the importance of pursuing answers to questions about the social world the way Sayer et al. (2004) did, you can understand the importance of investigating the social world. One purpose of this book is to introduce you to social science research methods like the ones Sayer and her colleagues used and show how they improve on everyday methods of answering questions. Each chapter integrates instruction in research methods with investigation of interesting aspects of the social world, such as the Internet and social relations, immigration and ethnic conflict, domestic violence, crime, work organizations, feelings of distress, patterns of democratization, and likelihood of voting.

Another purpose of this book is to give you the critical skills necessary to evaluate research. Just “doing research” is not enough. Just reading that some conclusions are “based on a research study” is not sufficient. You must learn to ask many questions before concluding that research-based conclusions are appropriate. What did the researchers set out to investigate? How were people selected for study? What information was collected, and how was it analyzed? Throughout this book, you will learn what questions to ask when critiquing a research study and how to evaluate the answers. You can begin to sharpen your critical teeth on the illustrative studies throughout the book.

Another goal of this book is to train you to actually do research. Substantive examples will help you see how methods are used in practice. Exercises at the end of each chapter give you ways to try different methods alone or in a group. A checklist for research proposals will chart a course for you when you plan more ambitious studies. But research methods cannot be learned by rote and applied mechanically. Thus you will learn the benefits and liabilities of each major approach to research and why employing a combination of them is often preferable. You will come to appreciate why the results of particular research studies must always be interpreted within the context of prior research and through the lens of social theory.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The way the book is organized reflects my beliefs in making research methods interesting, teaching students how to critique research, and viewing specific research techniques as parts of an integrated research strategy. The first three chapters introduce the why and how of research in general. Chapter 1 shows how research has helped us understand the effect of the Internet on social relations. Chapter 2 reviews the social science theories that can help us to understand problems like immigration and ethnic conflict and the research philosophies that shape our procedures. Chapter 3 illustrates the basic stages of research with a series of experiments on the police response to domestic violence. The next three chapters discuss how to evaluate the way researchers design their measures, draw their samples, and justify their statements about causal connections. As you learn about these procedures, you will also read about research on substance abuse and gangs, homelessness, and the causes of violence.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 present the three most important primary methods of data collection: experiments, surveys, and qualitative methods (including participant observation, intensive interviews, and focus groups). The substantive studies in these chapters show how these methods have been used to improve our understanding of psychological well-being, as well as social interactions at work, in nursing homes, and on school playgrounds. Chapter 10 then reviews major analysis techniques that are used by researchers to identify and understand data collected in qualitative research investigations. Reading Chapters 9 and 10 together will provide a firm foundation for further use of qualitative methods.

Chapters 11 and 12 present methodologies that can combine the primary methods reviewed in the preceding four chapters. Evaluation research, the focus of Chapter 11, can employ experiments, surveys, or qualitative methods to learn about the effects of and the need for social and other types of programs. I begin this chapter with an overview of evaluation research on drug abuse prevention programs. Chapter 12 focuses on historical and comparative methodologies, which can use data obtained with one or more of the primary methods to study processes at the regional and societal levels over time and between units; research examples focus on the process of democratization.

Chapter 13 introduces the techniques and challenges of secondary data analysis—the use of previously collected data to investigate new research questions. The online availability of thousands of datasets from social science studies has helped to make this approach to research increasingly popular. This chapter also presents the method of content analysis, for quantitative investigations of text. In Chapter 14, we will work through an analysis of voting patterns in the 2000 U.S. presidential election in order to see how statistics are used to answer an actual research question. We finish up in Chapter 15 with an overview of the process of and techniques for reporting research results, a second examination of the development of research proposals, and an introduction to meta-analysis—a special tool for studying prior research.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE FIFTH EDITION

The success of this book has been due in no small measure to the feedback I receive from methods instructors and their students. It also results from the availability in the research literature of so many excellent examples of how social scientists investigate interesting and

important questions about the social world and from my own continuing research experiences. You will find all of this reflected in innovations in approach, coverage, and organization:

Examples of social research as it occurs in real-world settings. Interesting studies of social relations, domestic violence, crime, and other social issues have been updated and extended from the fourth edition. New examples have been introduced from research on immigration and ethnic conflict, youth gangs, and poverty. These examples demonstrate that the exigencies and complexities of real life shape the application of research methods. This book also highlights the value of using multiple methods to study a research question.

Greater attention to secondary data analysis and content analysis. Coverage of the techniques and challenges of secondary data analysis has been expanded and moved into a new chapter; coverage of content analysis has also been expanded. This chapter directs students to sources of worthwhile data, and explains how to use the Inter-university Consortium of Political and Social Research (ICPSR) Web site.

Theoretical and philosophical research foundations. The role of social theory and of the philosophies that shape research procedures has been emphasized and their treatment streamlined. This foundation is now in Chapter 2, illustrated by research on immigration.

More integrated treatment of qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative and quantitative methods are contrasted in Chapter 1, and most other chapters include a special section on qualitative approaches. Chapter 9 now focuses solely on the logic and design of qualitative research, while Chapter 10 provides an expanded treatment of qualitative data analysis. The value of multiple methods of investigation is now illustrated with examples and procedural discussions in many chapters.

Ethical concerns and ethical decision making. Every step in the research process raises ethical concerns, so ethics should be treated in tandem with the study of specific methods. You will find ethics introduced in Chapter 3 and reviewed in the context of each method of data collection, data analysis, and reporting. Discussion of Institutional Review Boards has been updated to include current policy and practice.

International examples. The substantive research examples used to illustrate various methods now include research in or about countries throughout the world: The Netherlands, Ethiopia, Latin America, the European Community, and Russia. A subset of the 2002 International Social Survey Program (ISSP) on the Family and Changing Gender Roles dataset is included on the enclosed CD-ROM to facilitate cross-national exploration. SPSS exercises in Chapter 12 use the ISSP.

Useful instructional software. The enclosed CD-ROM has been enhanced extensively so that there are now interactive exercises to accompany each chapter. You should spend enough time with these lessons to become very comfortable with the basic research concepts presented.

End-of-chapter exercises. Exercises using Web sites have been updated and those involving SPSS, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, have been revised for use with the new 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) dataset (which is included on the CD-ROM). The copy of the HyperRESEARCH program for qualitative analysis, included on the CD-ROM, has been updated to facilitate explorations with the fascinating qualitative analyses described in Appendix G (which is also on the CD-ROM) and in the exercises for Chapter 10.

Aids to effective study. The many effective study aids included in previous editions have been updated, as needed. Appendix D, “Finding Information,” has been revised to present the latest information about using the Internet. Procedures for searching the literature and the Web and for writing literature reviews have been extended in Chapter 3. Appendix H, which you will find on the CD-ROM that accompanies the book, presents an annotated list of useful Web sites. The Pine Forge Press Web site includes online exercises for the text and an “article review matrix” that will help you to find and review interesting research using the methods presented in the text (click on the Study Sites tab at www.pineforge.com, or go directly to <http://www.pineforge.com/isw5/learning.htm>). The instructor’s manual on CD-ROM includes even more exercises that have been especially designed for collaborative group work in and outside of class.

It is, a privilege to be able to share with so many students the results of excellent social science investigations of the social world. If *Investigating the Social World* communicates the excitement of social research and the importance of evaluating carefully the methods we use in that research, then I have succeeded in representing fairly what social scientists do. If this book conveys accurately the latest developments in research methods, it demonstrates simply that social scientists are themselves committed to evaluating and improving their own methods of investigation. I think it is fair to say that we practice what we preach.

Now you’re the judge. I hope that you and your instructor enjoy learning how to investigate the social world and perhaps do some investigating along the way. And I hope you find that the knowledge and (dare I say it?) enthusiasm you develop for social research in this course will serve you well throughout your education, in your career, and in your community.

A NOTE ABOUT USING SPSS

To carry out the SPSS exercises at the end of each chapter and in Appendix F, you must already have SPSS on your computer. The exercises use a subset of the 2004 GSS dataset (included on the disk). This dataset includes variables on topics such as work, family, gender roles, government institutions, race relations, and politics. Appendix F will get you up and running with SPSS for Windows, and you can then spend as much time as you like exploring characteristics and attitudes of Americans. Just start SPSS on your PC, open the GSS2004mini file, and begin with the first SPSS exercise in Chapter 1. If you have the full version of SPSS, you can also work with the complete GSS2004 dataset. Of course, I’ve included that on your CD-ROM as well. You can also carry out analyses of the GSS at a University of California, Berkeley, Web site: <http://csa.berkeley.edu:7502/archive.htm>.

The CD-ROM also includes a subset of the 2002 International Social Survey Program dataset. In addition, the CD-ROM contains documentation files for the GSS2004 and the ISSP2002, as well as the complete GSS2004 dataset. You can use the complete dataset if you have access to have access to the full version of SPSS.

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—RUSSELL K. SCHUTT
Lexington, Massachusetts

To Julia Ellen Schutt

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