

# *Preface*

Detectives can know the excitement of discovering a critical piece of evidence. Prosecuting attorneys can know the satisfaction of bringing a guilty person to justice, and defense attorneys can prevent a miscarriage of justice. Judges and juries bear the responsibility of discerning the truth. Research psychologists play all these roles as they search for evidence, make the case, and render verdicts about what principles of behavior and mental processes are true. What are the effects of day care on children's intellectual and social development? To what extent do our genes determine our personalities? What are the consequences of racial stereotyping on the targets and perpetrators of these stereotypes?

For over two decades we have been writing editions of this research methods textbook with the hope that we could capture the excitement of psychological inquiry as well as the importance of understanding the methods used to conduct research. Our greatest satisfaction from writing this textbook and teaching research methods has been seeing students who enter the course feeling mild trepidations, leave not only feeling competent and confident but also excited about their understanding of the research process.

## **ORGANIZATION AND APPROACH**

Our approach is based on our years of teaching experience. As instructors of research methods, we recognize that most students in our classes will be consumers of research and not producers of research. Students who choose to take on either role will benefit from developing critical thinking skills. We believe that we can best help our students think critically by taking a problem-solving approach to the study of research methods. Researchers begin with a good question and then select a research method that can best help them answer their question. The sometimes painstaking task of gathering evidence is only the beginning of the research process. Analyzing and interpreting the evidence are equally important in making claims about psychological processes. Researchers (and students) must analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the method they have chosen in order to be able to evaluate critically the nature of the evidence they have obtained.

Another feature that we continue from our last edition is the website designed for our book. There are interactive exercises and quizzes for students to test their knowledge of text material, as well as links to other important psychology websites. Instructors will find the instructor's manual and lecture/discussion aids helpful. Both students and instructors may easily contact the authors via this site. Please come see us at [www.mhhe.com/shaughnessy6](http://www.mhhe.com/shaughnessy6).

## CHANGES IN THIS EDITION

The expression “The more things change, the more they stay the same” applies when writing a sixth edition of a textbook. We continue in this edition to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of each research method using examples from the rich psychology literature. We do so because we think that reading actual research examples will help students appreciate the critical link between research methods and psychological knowledge. We believe that it is this appreciation for research methods and their findings that makes the study of psychology even more fulfilling and meaningful. We also continue to use bullet points within the chapters and Review Questions at the end of chapters to help students see clearly what points we think are most important for them to learn. And we continue to rely on the Challenge Questions at the end of chapters to help students learn to apply the principles they have learned. Building on the model of the Challenge Questions, we have embedded Stretching Exercises in most chapters to allow students to apply research principles while they are learning about the principles.

But things *do* change. Since we published our last edition, APA has revised the ethical principles and code of conduct for psychologists, and published a new edition of the *Publication Manual*. We have included these APA changes in Chapter 3 on ethical issues and in Chapter 14 (an appendix in previous editions) on communication in psychology. We have revised the overall structure of the book to include 14 chapters rather than the 10 in the previous edition. We have streamlined the text by emphasizing student relevant examples that clearly illustrate the major principles of the research method presented in each chapter. We hope that the shorter chapters will facilitate students’ learning of the material and instructors’ flexibility in designing their course. We have also added a new opening chapter that welcomes students to the study of research methods by using an analogy between the criminal justice process and the scientific process. Discussion questions at the end of this chapter encourage students to become active learners from the beginning.

A final and major structural change we have made is to revise the appendix on statistics from previous editions into two new chapters that deal with data analysis and interpretation (Chapters 12 and 13). We leaned heavily on Robert Abelson’s ideas as elucidated in his published articles and book, *Statistics as Principled Argument* (1995/Erlbaum), and on the APA Task Force on Statistical Inference (Wilkinson et al., 1999). Students will be introduced in these two chapters to a three-stage approach to analysis: an exploratory stage (getting to know the data); a summary (descriptive) stage; and a confirmation stage (confirming what the data reveal). We are optimistic that careful study of the material in these chapters will give students the necessary background both to read published research articles critically and to analyze data from their own research projects. Having more complete coverage of statistical issues in these two chapters has allowed us to focus on the conceptual issues of data analysis in the individual chapters covering specific research methods. Students can gain an appreciation of the way in which research methods and data analysis are intertwined without studying Chapters 12 and 13. By studying these

chapters, however, their understanding of both data analysis and research methods will be enriched.

## WORDS OF THANKS

Many knowledgeable and discerning reviewers over the years contributed to this latest edition. Among the most recent to whom we are grateful are:

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If a change that was recommended didn't appear, it wasn't because we didn't consider carefully what these reviewers were telling us. We did. Thanks for pushing us to be better.

The cumulative contributions of many others to this and earlier editions are by now beyond easy acknowledgment. Yet, some people stand out as helping to prepare this latest edition. They include our colleagues at Loyola University Chicago, Emil Posavac and Scott Tindale, who read and critiqued the new chapters dealing with data analysis and interpretation, and Joe Sherwin, Director of Research Services at Loyola, who read carefully the ethics chapter and made important suggestions for changes. Many thanks go to Paula N. Shaughnessy, who did the final formatting of the entire manuscript and prepared the Glossary and References. We also acknowledge Liz Zechmeister who helped us obtain permissions for photos and work cited.

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