

## PREFACE

This book began 12 years ago when I was forced to think about research methods in a new way. Approached by an organization to help them assess their human resources policy and training, I was overwhelmed by the task of identifying the problems and discovering and developing practical, yet theoretically based solutions. I eagerly agreed to help the organization because their problem—how to create a workplace in which respect and dignity were the core values—was an opportunity to test my skills and abilities as a researcher. I knew that I first needed to develop content expertise. After conducting library and electronic database searches, I realized that the information I obtained was incomplete and at times conflicting. Yet, this information allowed me to develop an initial response that included policy, training, and reporting procedures. I could have stopped there, presented the information to the organization, and considered myself done with the task. Yet, conducting research within the organization was a unique research opportunity, allowing me to both contribute to the organizational communication literature base and create a more tailored response for the organization.

Moving further into this process, I conducted focus groups with employees at all levels to gain insight into their personal experiences in the organization. Policy and training would not be as effective if they did not address the needs of employees and management. Data from the focus groups revealed that employees identified a few managers whom they believed to be effective in dealing with employee issues. I conducted field interviews with these individuals. Data from those interviews revealed that inconsistencies among the organization's current policies, training, and reporting procedures were a significant problem. Next, I conducted a content analysis of the organization's policies to examine how the

organization defined and formalized the relationship between managers and employees.

Again, I could have stopped there, presented the information to the organization, and considered myself done with the task. But a new research opportunity presented itself—to test employee and management acceptance of the policy and training I proposed. After designing and conducting survey and experimental studies, I was able to tailor the messages the organization wanted to send in a way that was acceptable to and understandable by employees.

The point to this story is that research is a process. In some cases, library research from the vast store of communication literature may answer our research questions. In other cases, researchers must design studies to collect quantitative or qualitative data that, when analyzed, will answer those questions. Too many times, I hear students describe research as dull and boring with little relevance to their lives. But, when the research process is designed to answer questions about communication issues that are important to students, it provides them with a new perspective. Rather than considering research a boring and laborious chore, they recognize that research is the most effective means for answering meaningful questions in their lives.

The other point to my story is that far too often, I hear students and professors make claims such as "I'm a quantitative researcher" or "I'm an ethnographer." In reality, researchers must have a broad understanding and appreciation of all methodologies—quantitative and qualitative—in order to conduct their research effectively. The second edition of this book continues to emphasize three important points:

1. All research starts with an initial research question or problem.

2. Research is a process in which the researcher makes important decisions at crucial points about what to do and how to do it. This is in contrast to viewing research simply as a series of steps to be completed.
3. To answer the varied nature of questions about communication, one must be familiar with both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

*Communication Research: Asking Questions, Finding Answers* covers basic research issues and processes for both quantitative and qualitative approaches appropriate for communication students with no previous research methods experience. The text's guiding principle is that methodological choices are made from one's research questions or hypotheses. This avoids the pitfall in which students learn one methodology or one methodological skill and then force that method to answer all types of questions.

## FEATURES

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The primary purpose of this textbook is to introduce students to communication research methods by meeting two objectives. The first objective is to help students become better consumers of the communication research literature by emphasizing effective methods for finding, consuming, and analyzing communication research. This objective is important because students are resident consumers of the communication literature through their participation in other content- or context-specific communication courses. The second objective is to provide a path for students who wish to develop and conduct research projects. To those ends, this book provides coverage of the entire research process: how one conceptualizes a research idea, turns it into an interesting and researchable question, selects a methodology, conducts the study, and writes up the study's findings. I believe that students who can effectively navigate, select, and use the communication research literature can become effective researchers, and, reciprocally, that students engaged in communication research will be able to more effectively use the existing research literature. Regardless of the role in which

students use their research knowledge, they must be able to read and understand the communication research literature.

This book provides several features to help students succeed in both roles. First, numerous examples are drawn from published research to provide clear direction on *what this process or step looks like*. These examples, 150 of which are new to the second edition, are drawn from recent journal articles, which are available in most university and college libraries. Using examples from the breadth of the discipline (for example, persuasion, interpersonal, group, organizational, mass communication, and public relations) lessens the ambiguity between information presented in the book and students' understanding and potential application of the information.

Second, the book incorporates two kinds of boxes, placed throughout the chapters that alert students to the nuances of the research process. The first, *Design Check*, alerts students to the practical and logistical issues that student researchers should consider when designing a study. These are the same issues that students should ask of the research studies they read, because how these issues are addressed by researchers influences study outcomes and data interpretations. The second type of box, *An Ethical Issue*, alerts students to issues of research ethics and integrity. Not only must researchers balance practical and logistical issues, they must do so while addressing ethical issues that occur when *people* and their communication artifacts are used as the basis of research.

Third, the book is based on active pedagogy and the philosophy that students learn best by doing. *Chapter Checklists* begin each chapter to highlight for students the essential learning objectives for each chapter. The objectives help students make discrete distinctions about the research process and give students a standard for what they should be able to demonstrate after reading and studying chapter material. *Try This!* boxes are placed throughout the chapters to engage students in short research activities that can be used in the classroom with individuals or groups, or as short homework assignments. End-of-chapter summaries have been developed as point-by-point summaries of information

presented in the chapter. Stated simply, these factual statements can help direct students' study of the material and be used as a stimulus to extract students' understanding and application of the material. Key terms are boldfaced within the text and listed at the end of chapter. Key term definitions can be found in the glossary at the end of the book.

Fourth, the book presents a balance of quantitative and qualitative research because the communication research literature embraces both social scientific approaches. The second edition provides an improved focus on qualitative research: it has its own introductory chapter, two research design and one data analysis chapters, and a chapter devoted to the writing and reporting of qualitative data.

Finally, the book focuses on students. It is written for them—to their level of knowledge and understanding about human communication, the communication research literature, and the relative research processes. My goal in writing the chapters was to explain the research steps and identify the steps researchers take in developing and conducting communication research. With study and instruction, students should be able to use this material and integrate it with what they know and are familiar with from their other communication courses to accomplish two objectives: 1) to be more analytical and make more sophisticated interpretations of the communication research they read, and 2) to design and conduct basic quantitative and qualitative research studies.

## ORGANIZATION

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The book is divided into four sections. In the first section, Research Basics, students are introduced to the research process, its basic principles, both quantitative and qualitative research, and research ethics before specific methodological techniques are addressed. This organization emphasizes that research is a process, not just one type of method or research skill. Chapters 1 and 2 are introductory to research in general and are neutral with respect to methodology. The issues raised in these initial chapters are issues that both quantitative and

qualitative researchers must address. Then Chapters 3 and 4 provide introductions to both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This arrangement encourages students to consider both methodologies and to gain a foundation in each before proceeding to detailed information in subsequent chapters on how specific methods within each work. Chapter 5 is devoted to issues of research ethics—issues students must consider regardless of which methodology they choose.

The second section of the book, Quantitative Communication Research, provides detailed coverage on how research is conducted with quantitative methodologies. Chapters 6 through 9 explain measurement concepts, sampling procedures, hypothesis testing, and experimental, quasi-experimental, descriptive, and survey research designs. Chapters 10 through 12 explain descriptive statistics and statistical tests of differences and relationships, with a special emphasis on interpreting the results of these tests. Chapter 13 explores two quantitative methods for analyzing text and message content. Chapters in the third section, Qualitative Communication Research, focus on qualitative research design and present detailed information on field interviewing, focus groups, narratives, and ethnography as qualitative methods of data collection. A chapter is devoted to analyzing qualitative data collected with these methods.

The fourth section of the book, Reading and Writing Research Reports, provides separate chapters for concluding the research process. These chapters demystify this stage of the research process for students, whether they are reading the research literature or ready to write a research report. Researchers relying on tradition and customary practices are able and adept consumers of the research literature. Alternately, students confront the research literature with little understanding of how and why finished research reports look the way they do. By having access to this *insider* information, students will be able to prepare their final projects in the traditions of the discipline as well as be able to better decode the research literature.

In talking with colleagues who also teach research methods, I have found that instructors differ greatly in their treatment of statistical concepts.

To accommodate these differences in pedagogical style, this book presents the conceptual foundation of each test supported with examples of the test from the research literature. Each test is discussed from the point of view of a student who finds this test in the literature. Questions used to develop these chapters include: How should I read the results of any particular test? How do I connect these results to the research questions and hypotheses the authors proposed? Alternately, for those students who wish to design and conduct quantitative research projects, the statistical formulas (with worked examples as models for each test) appear in an appendix.

## TEACHING SUPPLEMENTS

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A detailed instructor's manual available on an Instructor's Resource CD-ROM and on the Instructor Center website accompanies the book. This manual includes sample syllabi, teaching tips, chapter and course assignments, exercises for each chapter, and a test bank. This manual also includes worksheets for each chapter. Typically one or two pages in length, worksheets can be used as a homework or in-class assignment for students to review their knowledge and understanding about the material presented. Question types include objective (for example, fill in the blank), comprehension (for example, explain how academic research differs from proprietary research), and behavioral (for example, given a set of variables the student is asked to write research questions and hypotheses). For those chapters that cover statistics or the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data, additional worksheets are available, which provide students with the opportunity to work several examples from raw data through to interpretation.

Finally, the book's website, [www.mhhe.com/keyton2](http://www.mhhe.com/keyton2), includes PowerPoint outlines for each chapter; URLs for websites that support or provide additional material presented in the chapters; and online review tests, a glossary, crossword puzzles, and flashcards for students to use in reviewing the material. The Instructor Center includes the Instructor's Manual, PowerPoint slides, and links to support materials.

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