The Practice of Social Research
Writing is my joy, sociology my passion. I delight in putting words together in a way that makes people learn or laugh or both. Sociology shows up as a set of words, also. It represents our last, best hope for planet-training our race and finding ways for us to live together. I feel a special excitement at being present when sociology, at last, comes into focus as an idea whose time has come.

I grew up in small-town Vermont and New Hampshire. When I announced I wanted to be an auto-body mechanic, like my dad, my teacher told me I should go to college instead. When Malcolm X announced he wanted to be a lawyer, his teacher told him a colored boy should be something more like a carpenter. The difference in our experiences says something powerful about the idea of a level playing field. The inequalities among ethnic groups run deep.

I ventured into the outer world by way of Harvard, the USMC, U.C. Berkeley, and twelve years teaching at the University of Hawaii.

I resigned from teaching in 1980 and wrote full-time for seven years, until the call of the classroom became too loud to ignore. For me, teaching is like playing jazz. Even if you perform the same number over and over, it never comes out the same twice and you don’t know exactly what it’ll sound like until you hear it. Teaching is like writing with your voice.

In 2006, I retired from teaching once more, and can now devote myself more fully to writing. I’ve been writing textbooks for over half my life, and it keeps becoming more exciting, rather than less. I can’t wait to see what happens next.
Dedication

Suzanne Babbie
Contents in Brief

**PART 1**
An Introduction to Inquiry 1
1. Science and Social Research 2
2. Social Inquiry: Ethics and Politics 30
3. Inquiry, Theory, and Paradigms 56

**PART 2**
The Structuring of Inquiry: Quantitative and Qualitative 87
4. Purpose and Design of Research Projects 88
5. Sampling Logic 123
6. From Concept to Measurement 163
7. Typologies, Indexes, and Scales 197

**PART 3**
Modes of Observation: Quantitative and Qualitative 227
8. Surveys 228
9. Experiments and Experimentation 270
10. Unobtrusive Measures 294

**PART 4**
Analysis of Data: Quantitative and Qualitative 387
11. Paradigms, Methods, and Ethics of Qualitative Field Research 323
12. Evaluation Research: Types, Methods, and Issues 358

**Appendixes** 523
A. Using the Library 524
B. GSS Household Enumeration Questionnaire 533
C. Random Numbers 543
D. Distribution of Chi Square 545
E. Normal Curve Areas 547
F. Estimated Sampling Error 548
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Darwinism</th>
<th>60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Paradigm</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Interactionism</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnomethodology</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural Functionalism</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Paradigms</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Race Theory</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational Objectivity Reconsidered</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elements of Social Theory</strong></td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two Logical Systems Revisited</strong></td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Traditional Model of Science</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deductive and Inductive Reasoning: A Case Illustration</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Graphic Contrast</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deductive Theory Construction</strong></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Started</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructing Your Theory</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Example of Deductive Theory: Distributive Justice</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inductive Theory Construction</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Example of Inductive Theory: Why Do People Smoke Marijuana?</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Links between Theory and Research</strong></td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Ethics and Theory</strong></td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part 2** The Structuring of Inquiry: Quantitative and Qualitative 87

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CHAPTER 4</strong> Purpose and Design of Research Projects</th>
<th>88</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Three Purposes of Research</strong></td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomothetic Explanation 93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for Nomothetic Causality</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomothetic Causal Analysis and Hypothesis Testing</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False Criteria for Nomothetic Causality</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Necessary and Sufficient Causes</strong> 96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Units of Analysis</strong> 97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizations</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Interactions</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Artifacts</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units of Analysis in Review</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faulty Reasoning about Units of Analysis: The Ecological Fallacy and Reductionism 103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Time Dimension</strong> 105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Sectional Studies</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longitudinal Studies</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximating Longitudinal Studies</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of Research Strategies</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How to Design a Research Project</strong> 112</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Started</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptualization</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of Research Method</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operationalization</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population and Sampling</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Processing</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design in Review</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Research Proposal</strong> 118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of a Research Proposal</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CHAPTER 5</strong> Sampling Logic</th>
<th>123</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Brief History of Sampling</strong></td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Alf Landon</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Thomas E. Dewey</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two Types of Sampling Methods</strong></td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 3 Modes of Observation: Quantitative and Qualitative 227

CHAPTER 8 Surveys 228

Introduction 229
Topics Appropriate for Survey Research 229
Guidelines for Asking Questions 230
  Choose Appropriate Question Forms 231
  Make Items Clear 232
  Avoid Double-Barreled Questions 232
  Respondents Must Be Competent to Answer 232
  Respondents Must Be Willing to Answer 234
  Questions Should Be Relevant 234
  Short Items Are Best 234
  Avoid Negative Items 235
  Avoid Biased Items and Terms 235
Questionnaire Construction 237
  General Questionnaire Format 237
  Formats for Respondents 237
  Contingency Questions 238
  Matrix Questions 239
  Ordering Items in a Questionnaire 240
  Questionnaire Instructions 241
  Pretesting the Questionnaire 242
  A Composite Illustration 242
Self-Administered Questionnaires 242
  Mail Distribution and Return 245
Monitoring Returns 246
Follow-Up Mailings 247
Response Rates 247
Compensation for Respondents 248
A Case Study 249

CHAPTER 9 Experiments and Experimentation 270

Introduction 271
Topics Appropriate for Experiments 271
The Classical Experiment 272
  Independent and Dependent Variables 272
  Pretesting and Posttesting 272
  Experimental and Control Groups 273
  The Double-Blind Experiment 274
Selecting Subjects 275
  Probability Sampling 276
  Randomization 276
  Matching 277
  Matching or Randomization? 278
Variations on Experimental Design 278
  Preexperimental Research Designs 278
  Validity Issues in Experimental Research 279
An Illustration of Experimentation 285
Alternative Experimental Settings 287
   Web-Based Experiments 288
   “Natural” Experiments 289
Strengths and Weaknesses of the Experimental Method 290
Ethics and Experiments 291

CHAPTER 10
Unobtrusive Measures 294

Introduction 295
Content Analysis 295
   Topics Appropriate for Content Analysis 296
   Sampling in Content Analysis 297
   Coding in Content Analysis 300
   Illustrations of Content Analysis 305
   Strengths and Weaknesses of Content Analysis 306
Analyzing Existing Statistics 307
   Durkheim’s Study of Suicide 307
   The Consequences of Globalization 309
   Units of Analysis 310
   Problems of Validity 310
   Problems of Reliability 311
   Sources of Existing Statistics 311
Comparative and Historical Research 314
   Examples of Comparative and Historical Research 314
   Sources of Comparative and Historical Data 317
   Analytic Techniques 318
Ethics and Unobtrusive Measures 320

CHAPTER 11
Paradigms, Methods, and Ethics of Qualitative Field Research 323

Introduction 324
Topics Appropriate for Field Research 324

Special Considerations in Qualitative Field Research 327
   The Various Roles of the Observer 328
   Relations to Subjects 329
Some Qualitative Field Research Paradigms 333
   Naturalism 333
   Ethnomethodology 334
   Grounded Theory 336
   Case Studies and the Extended Case Method 338
   Institutional Ethnography 340
   Participatory Action Research 341
Conducting Qualitative Field Research 343
   Preparing for the Field 343
   Qualitative Interviewing 345
   Focus Groups 349
   Recording Observations 350
Strengths and Weaknesses of Qualitative Field Research 353
   Validity 353
   Reliability 354
Ethics and Qualitative Field Research 355

CHAPTER 12
Evaluation Research: Types, Methods, and Issues 358

Introduction 359
Topics Appropriate for Evaluation Research 360
Formulating the Problem: Issues of Measurement 362
   Specifying Outcomes 363
   Measuring Experimental Contexts 364
   Specifying Interventions 364
   Specifying the Population 364
   New versus Existing Measures 365
   Operationalizing Success/Failure 365
Types of Evaluation Research
Designs 366
  Experimental Designs 366
  Quasi-Experimental Designs 367
  Qualitative Evaluations 371
The Social Context 373
  Logistical Problems 373
  Use of Research Results 375
Social Indicators Research 380
  The Death Penalty and Deterrence 380
  Computer Simulation 381
Ethics and Evaluation Research 382

Part 4  Analysis of Data: Quantitative and Qualitative 387

CHAPTER 14
Analyzing Quantitative Data 413
Introduction 414
Quantification of Data 414
  Developing Code Categories 415
  Codebook Construction 417
  Data Entry 418
Univariate Analysis 418
  Distributions 418
  Central Tendency 420
  Dispersion 423
  Continuous and Discrete Variables 425
  Detail versus Manageability 426
Subgroup Comparisons 426
  “Collapsing” Response Categories 427
  Handling “Don’t Knows” 428
  Numerical Descriptions in Qualitative Research 429
Bivariate Analysis 430
  Percentaging a Table 431
  Constructing and Reading Bivariate Tables 433
Introduction to Multivariate Analysis 434
Sociological Diagnostics 435
Ethics and Quantitative Data Analysis 437

CHAPTER 15
Origins and Paradigm of the Elaboration Model 441
Introduction 442
The Origins of the Elaboration Model 442
The Elaboration Paradigm 447
  Replication 448
  Explanation 448
  Interpretation 451
  Specification 452
  Refinements to the Paradigm 453

CHAPTER 13
Analyzing Qualitative Data 389
Introduction 390
Linking Theory and Analysis 390
  Discovering Patterns 390
  Grounded Theory Method 392
  Semiotics 393
  Conversation Analysis 395
Qualitative Data Processing 396
  Coding 396
  Memoing 400
  Concept Mapping 401
Computer Software for Qualitative Data Analysis 403
  QDA Programs 403
  Using NVivo to Understand Women Film Directors, by Sandrine Zerbib 404
The Qualitative Analysis of Quantitative Data 407
Evaluating the Quality of Qualitative Research 407
Ethics and Qualitative Data Analysis 410