

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. As Sharon Begley, writer for *Newsweek*, commented in an essay critiquing science education: “Science is not a collection of facts but a way of interrogating the world.” Moreover, “The most useful skill we could teach is the habit of asking oneself and others, *how do you know?*” (*Newsweek*, November 8, 2010, p. 26).

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. Please come see us at www.mhhe.com/shaughnessy10e. In addition, the authors may be contacted at ZechResearchMethods@gmail.com.

As has been our approach for each edition, students learn that a *multimethod approach* to answering questions will best advance the science of psychology and that one goal of this book is to “fill their toolbox” with strategies for conducting research. Thus, our organization following the introductory chapters is in terms of “methods,” moving from the simplest of observational techniques to complex experimental designs. We remain sensitive to ethical issues in psychological research and to the dilemmas researchers face when they study animal or human behavior. To emphasize our concern we give “ethics” its own chapter (Chapter 3) but also discuss specific ethical issues in other chapters as they relate to particular methodologies.

We believe that research methods are best taught in the context of published psychological research. Thus, we continue to use the rich psychology literature to provide examples of ways in which researchers actually use the methods we discuss. It is always fun for us to update the research examples, while continuing to include important “classic” findings and studies that have proved effective in helping students learn research methods. We believe that one way to motivate students to join us on this exciting path of pursuing knowledge is to show the “payoff” that psychological research provides.

Pedagogical aids include bullet points and Key Concepts within the chapters, and Review Questions at the end of chapters to help students see clearly the 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. An extensive review of statistics remains at the end of the book (Chapters 11 and 12), and we continue to introduce these issues briefly in the appropriate places in the text. One way this is done is through a pedagogical aid we call “Stat Tips,” which draws students’ attention to questions of statistical analysis. In some cases we answer those questions for students; in other instances we refer them to material in Chapters 11 and 12. We believe our approach provides important flexibility that allows instructors to decide when and how they will cover statistics in a research methods course.