

# COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

*Asking Questions, Finding Answers*

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Joann Keyton

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# COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

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# Communication Research

ASKING QUESTIONS, FINDING ANSWERS

FIFTH EDITION

**Joann Keyton**

*North Carolina State University*





## COMMUNICATION RESEARCH: ASKING QUESTIONS, FINDING ANSWERS, FIFTH EDITION

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# PREFACE

Thank you for picking up this book and reading the preface. I am a communication researcher who conducts and publishes quantitative and qualitative research. I am always learning something new about research methods, and, perhaps, most central to this preface—I really enjoy teaching research methods courses. I designed this research methods book to help students overcome their fear of research methods and to provide instructors with foundational material for their classroom use. Over the previous editions, including this one, I have received a substantial amount of feedback of how the book could be more effective for both instructors and students. Most directly, I receive feedback from my students when I teach undergraduate and graduate research methods courses. More formal feedback has come from the publisher who seeks professional reviews of textbooks before an author begins work on a new edition. Other times, feedback has come informally from conversations at conferences or in e-mails from instructors or students using the book. I'm grateful for everyone who has taken the time to comment, to point out what's good or bad, and to suggest what they would like to see in a new edition—and what they hope I will remove.

So, simply, the goal of this book is to be helpful to instructors in teaching research methods and to be supportive to students who are learning research methods.

My other goal is to focus on communication research. I emphasize *communication*, as all of the examples used in book are drawn from the published research of communication scholars in communication or communication-related journals. I hope you will (and you will encourage your students to) go back to these cited sources.

I've written this book to be most useful to students (undergraduate or beginning graduate level) who have little or no familiarity with communication research. I have used previous editions at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and know others have done the same. I hope that the book hits a middle ground that is engaging for undergraduates but can also provide a

foundation for beginning graduate students (with the help of additional reading material and more sophisticated in-class exercises). Across the chapters, I've selected techniques and methods that are foundational to more advanced methods and ones that students can learn to use in research settings.

What I've learned from the publisher's examination of the research methods book market and from my conversations with colleagues who teach research methods is that no two instructors teach the research methods course in the same way. Some faculty focus on quantitative; some faculty focus on qualitative; and some do a mix of the two. Some of us insist that students *do the math*; others of us want statistics presented conceptually. Some of us want more of the philosophical traditions that are the underpinning of quantitative and qualitative methods; some don't. Thus, I've had to make choices. But my choices were guided by a principle I've long believed in: Researchers must have a broad understanding and appreciation of all methodologies—quantitative and qualitative—to conduct their research effectively.

To that end, the fifth 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 little or 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.

## WHAT'S NEW TO THE FIFTH EDITION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

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The book presents a balance of quantitative and qualitative research because the communication scholarship embraces both approaches. In addition to updating the published research examples and research references sources (71 new references are included), I've retained the organization and the continuation of the increased focus on qualitative research initiated in the fourth edition.

Based on feedback from reviewers for the fourth edition, the book is divided into three sections. In the first section, *Research Basics*, students are introduced to the research process, its basic principles, and research ethics. Chapters in this first section 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. Section 2 focuses on quantitative communication research methods whereas Section 3 focuses on qualitative communication research methods.

Across all chapters, emphasis was placed on updating examples and reference sources to align the book with current research practices in the communication discipline. All of the new references are drawn from the most recently published literature. Across all of the chapters, I continued to be more inclusive of examples drawn from research conducted in other parts of the world and by researchers outside the United States. Likewise I updated technology examples to reflect the current mediated environment.

The book remains in APA 6th, as that is the style requirement of most social science communication journals.

Material previously in the print appendices has been moved to the book's website, [www.mhhe.com/keyton5e](http://www.mhhe.com/keyton5e),

where instructors and students will also find PowerPoint presentations for each chapter, test banks, and an instructor's manual. As with the last edition, a note about online resources available to students concludes each chapter. I update the resources at my own website ([www.joannkeyton.com/research-methods](http://www.joannkeyton.com/research-methods)) each academic year. There, you can also find short quizzes. Additional instructor resources and assignments can be found on Connect. Whether you assign students to work with the resources inside or outside of class, or expect students to use these materials on their own, the online resources provide students with ways to enhance and test their knowledge of research methods.

## 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 consumers of the communication literature through their participation in 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.

1. The research process is situated in communication research about symbols, messages, and meanings.

2. Seventy one new research and reference source citations were added; these new citations were pulled from the 2014 through 2017 published communication and communication-related journals found on Communication and Mass Media Complete.
3. Examples cover the breadth of the discipline (e.g., persuasion, interpersonal, group, health, organizational, mass communication, and public relations).
4. A boxed feature labeled *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, as how these issues are addressed by researchers influences study outcomes and data interpretations.
5. A boxed feature labeled *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. *Chapter Checklists* begin each chapter to highlight for students the essential learning objectives for each chapter. End-of-chapter summaries provide point-by-point summaries of information presented in the chapter. Stated simply, these factual statements can help direct students' study 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.
6. Continuing the active pedagogy approach of the book, *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. 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.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING SUPPLEMENTS

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Instructor resources and assignments can be found on Connect, including sample syllabi, teaching tips, chapter and course assignments, exercises, and 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 understand about the material presented. Also included on the website are PowerPoint outlines for each chapter and a test bank. Question types include objective (e.g., fill in the blank), comprehension (e.g., explain how academic research differs from proprietary research), and behavioral (e.g., 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.

Student content can also be found at the same website ([www.mhhe.com/keyton5e](http://www.mhhe.com/keyton5e)). Student content is not password-protected and includes PowerPoint outlines for each chapter.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**Joann Keyton** (B.A., Western Michigan University; M.A., Ph.D., The Ohio State University) is Professor of Communication at North Carolina State University. She specializes in group communication and organizational communication. Her current research examines the collaborative processes and relational aspects of interdisciplinary teams, participants' use of language in team meetings, the multiplicity of cultures



in organizations, and how messages are manipulated in sexual harassment. Her research is field focused and she was honored with the 2011 Gerald Phillips Award for Distinguished Applied Communication Scholarship by the National Communication Association.

Her research has been published in *Business Communication Quarterly*, *Communication Monographs*, *Communication Research*, *Communication Studies*, *Communication Theory*, *Communication Yearbook*, *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *Journal of Business Communication*, *Management Communication Quarterly*, *Small Group Research*, *Southern Communication Journal*, and numerous edited collections including the *Handbook of Group Communication Theory and Research*, *The Cambridge Handbook of Group Interaction Analysis*, *The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Climate and Culture*, *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Communication*, and *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*.

In addition to publications in scholarly journals and edited collections, she has published three textbooks for courses in group communication, research methods, and organizational culture in addition to co-editing an organizational communication case book. Keyton was editor of the *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Volumes 31–33, founding editor of *Communication Currents*, Volumes 1–5, and associate editor of the *International Encyclopedia of Organizational Communication*. Currently, she is editor of *Small Group Research*. She was a founder and vice-chair of the Interdisciplinary Network for Group Research.

For more information, contact Joann at [jkeyton@ncsu.edu](mailto:jkeyton@ncsu.edu) or [www.joannkeyton.com](http://www.joannkeyton.com)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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In writing this book, I have benefited from the generosity of researchers, scientists, and scholars from many disciplines around the world. Unlike many other bodies of knowledge, the Web has become a cornucopia of information about research methods and statistics. When contacted by e-mail, these colleagues were both prompt and generous.

I have also benefited from the many undergraduate and graduate students in my research methods course who continued to say that they did not understand after I had explained a concept or technique. Their questioning and my inability to always provide them

an appropriate and acceptable answer provided the motivation for this text.

This fifth edition has benefited from the many instructors and students who have e-mailed me with questions or issues they would like me to address or explain further. I appreciate this feedback-in-progress and much of it has been incorporated here.

I also thank the scholars who reviewed this text during its development for the encouragement and wisdom they extended. Reviewers for the fifth edition were: Jennifer E. Potter, Towson University; Danielle Leek, Grand Valley State University; Jeffrey D. Brand, University of Northern Iowa; Rick Olsen, UNCW; and Charles Goehring, San Diego State University.

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For the fourth edition, I thanked Amber Messersmith for always being kind, friendly, and cheerful. I also thanked Joe Bonito whose humor about research methods, communication research, and, particularly, group research lifts my spirits. Thanks continues to go to Andrew Ledbetter for his willingness to engage me in Facebook discussions about research methods, especially why the doi is important in a reference citation. For this fifth edition, I would like to thank my growing network of research colleagues from other disciplines. Being asked over and over why communication matters and how we study communication are conversations I never mind having.

I would also like to thank the many undergraduate and graduate students who have worked with me at North Carolina State University, University of Kansas, and University of Memphis on research projects and who have worked through research issues (and challenged me) in methodology classes. For me, methodology is the best teaching assignment I can have.

My Dalmatian family has changed once again. Between the fourth and fifth editions, both Sonny and

Zoe passed and are now at The Rainbow Bridge with Cher, Potter, Maggie, and Sally. The Dalmatian rescues were looking out for me and lead me to Penny, aka Keyton's Lucky Penny. She may be deaf, but she runs 100 yards in 8.3 seconds. She has taken up the mantle of making sure that I live up to my promise that I will not forget what my *real* job is: to let the dogs in, let the dogs out, let the dogs in, let the dogs out. . . .

Jeff—this book is for you. As a student, you would not allow me to let you down. As a friend, you have not let me down. Your invaluable lessons, both professional and personal, helped me write this text in the beginning and through its revisions. Thanks for your continual support and encouragement.

Joann Keyton

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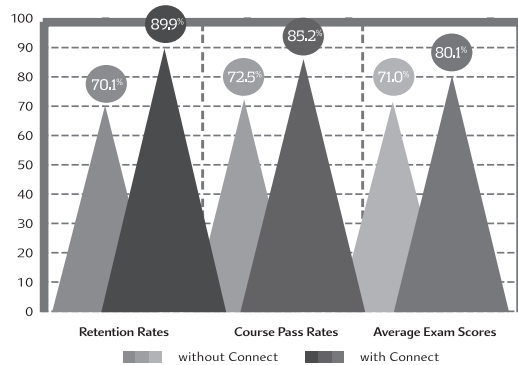
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# Introduction to Communication Research

### *Chapter Checklist*

*After reading this chapter, you should be able to:*

1. Identify instances in which you could use or conduct communication research as a student, use or conduct communication research as a professional, and use the results of communication research in your personal life.
  2. Explain the goals of research.
  3. Explain the relationship of research and theory.
  4. Explain communication research as a social science.
  5. Describe how communication research from a social science perspective is different from other forms of communication research and other forms of social science research.
  6. Differentiate among the characteristics of science.
  7. Distinguish between research question and hypothesis.
  8. Describe the differences among questions of fact, variable relations, value, and policy.
  9. Identify questions about communication that you believe are worth pursuing.
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