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The book has been written with undergraduates and postgraduates studying research methods in such fields as sociology, social psychology, education, organization studies, social policy, and similar subjects in mind. I have drawn on research relating to a variety of topics and areas in the social sciences in order to enhance the book's general appeal.

I wish to thank thirteen generations of undergraduates who have taken my Research Methods course at Loughborough University. Many of the ideas in this book derive from this contact. The students' often blunt refusal to accept many of the extreme versions of the debate about quantitative and qualitative research sharpened my own appreciation of many of the issues. Martin Bulmer has been a supportive and extremely helpful editor. His comments and criticisms greatly assisted the formulation of the book's central themes. I am grateful to Michael Billig and Louis Cohen for their advice on a number of chapters. I also wish to thank Richard Jenkins for a personal communication relating to his research on Belfast youth. My wife, Sue, offered much stylistic advice, for which I am grateful. Of course, none of these individuals is to blame for any of the book's deficiencies, which are entirely of my