QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
Our colleague Steve Lapan passed away unexpectedly just as this book went to press. This edited text was Steve’s idea, and although we each brought our own experiences and expertise to its organization, the book would not exist without his initiative. Steve was our friend, our colleague, our mentor, our co-conspirator. Steve loomed large. He was funny and irreverent, curious and cynical. As a mentor, Steve was clear, strong, and indefatigable. When Steve was on your side, you knew you had an advocate who would fight with heart and soul for your cause. When he wasn’t, you knew you needed to lay low and hope for the best.

I (Frances) first met Steve as a colleague not long after I came to Northern Arizona University (NAU). We were office neighbors and immediately recognized a shared interest in research in schools. We talked methodology and methods, students and administrators. Later we played poker once a month; we played for pennies and nickels—not much money, but plenty of entertainment. Steve brought his chips, I brought my cheat sheet, and with five colleagues (eventually including Steve’s wife, Pat), we spent the occasional Friday night wagering and bluffing, and enjoying every minute.

I (MaryLynn) first interacted with Steve as I was entering my second year in NAU’s Curriculum and Instruction Doctoral Program. Despite his somewhat gruff demeanor and intimidating physical presence, I found him to have both high expectations and a generous heart. It is because of his expertise and enthusiasm for research in its many forms that my career took the path it did. Without Steve’s encouragement and support, I would never have pursued editing a methodology book, much less two!

There aren’t too many people like Steve in one’s life; we’re grateful that he blessed ours. We dedicate this text to him.
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This beginning textbook, *Qualitative Research: An Introduction to Methods and Designs*, is designed specifically for students taking their first, and possibly only, qualitative research course. Writing a text for students in education and the social sciences, we set out to serve three main purposes:

1. Provide a broad spectrum of research approaches, ranging from such recognizable investigative areas as historical and ethnographic research to emerging methodologies including autoethnography and arts-based research
2. Detail the basic purposes and processes of research approaches, explaining in each case how they are planned, conducted, and reported
3. Offer explanations and examples of how educational and social scientific research study results can be interpreted, evaluated, and applied across many professions

This book can also serve as an introductory source for students who plan to pursue advanced study and conduct their own qualitative research, but its primary aim is to offer readable, accessible content for the practitioner-consumer. As students graduate from college and begin their career, they become both professional practitioners of their discipline and potential consumers of research findings.

**To the Instructor**

This introductory research text is intended as a guide for your students who are most likely to be consumers, but not necessarily producers, of qualitative research. Although the book might serve as a primer for fledgling researchers, the overarching goal is to support your efforts in teaching students to become more intelligent readers and interpreters of this kind of research conducted by others.