



Principles of Methodology: Research Design in Social Science

Perri 6, Christine Bellamy

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This book provides a comprehensive, accessible guide to social science methodology. In so doing, it establishes methodology as distinct from both methods and philosophy.

Most existing textbooks deal with methods, or sound ways of collecting and analysing data to generate findings. In contrast, this innovative book shows how an understanding of methodology allows us to design research so that findings can be used to answer interesting research questions and to build and test theories.

Most important things in social research (e.g., beliefs, institutions, interests, practices and social classes) cannot be observed directly. This book explains how empirical research can nevertheless be designed to make sound inferences about their nature, effects and significance.

The authors examine what counts as good description, explanation and interpretation, and how they can be achieved by striking intelligent trade-offs between competing design virtues.

Coverage includes:

- why methodology matters;
- what philosophical arguments show us about inference;
- competing virtues of good research design;
- purposes of theory, models and frameworks;
- forming researchable concepts and typologies;
- explaining and interpreting: inferring causation, meaning and significance; and
- combining explanation and interpretation.

The book is essential reading for new researchers faced with the practical challenge of designing research. Extensive examples and exercises are provided, based on the authors' long experience of teaching methodology to multi-disciplinary groups.

Perri 6 is Professor of Social Policy in the Graduate School in the College of Business, Law and Social Sciences at Nottingham Trent University.

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