

# ANNOTATIONS

## RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIAL RELATIONS<sup>1</sup>

**T**HIS book is an excellent summary of the main steps involved in social research. It is most useful as an overview of the interrelated series of problems encountered in conceiving and carrying through a program of social research. It describes most clearly how particular research steps or techniques fit into the larger pattern of a research design. The reviewer has found this book to be a useful text in a course in field methods in which social science students have been involved in carrying through a complete social research project.

The book is not a manual on how to solve the detailed problems encountered in various kinds of social research. With the rapid development of social science methodology this would require an encyclopedia. What this book does is to introduce the student to the major problems encountered in each part of the research process and the directions in which solutions may go. It provides a systematic general orientation from which students or practitioners can then proceed to a more intensive examination of technical problems from other sources.

The two volumes of the book are organized along different principles. The first volume by Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook is a largely self-sufficient account of the research process, covering such topics as selection and formulation of a research problem, research design, data collection methods, analysis and interpretation. As a self-contained unit the major gap in this volume is the area of sampling. However, this topic is covered in Volume Two.

<sup>1</sup> Jahoda, Marie; Deutsch, Morton; and Cook, Stuart: *RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIAL RELATIONS: WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO PREJUDICE. PART ONE: BASIC PROCESSES. PART TWO: SELECTED TECHNIQUES.* Edited by Marie Jahoda, Morton Deutsch and Stuart W. Cook. New York, The Dryden Press, 1951. x + 759 pp. \$6.00 (\$3.75 per volume).

The second volume contains more intensive and technical treatments of research problems covered to a greater or less extent in Volume One. Volume Two consists of a series of separate contributions by specialists in such fields as sampling, interviewing, observational field work, etc. While all of these essays are valuable, the intensity of treatment and the nature of coverage is quite uneven, probably a resultant of the multiplicity of authors. Leon Festinger's chapter on "Assumptions Underlying the Use of Statistical Techniques" is an excellent, albeit over-brief, discussion of issues that are basic but frequently overlooked in training social researchers.

While the book will be useful for the social sciences in general, it emphasizes particularly research methods and materials in the field of social psychology. This is not surprising, since the book was originally designed to deal exclusively with methods of research in intergroup relations. The social-psychological emphasis is apparent in the scanty treatment given to census materials, vital statistics, and agency records as a source of research data. This is a statement of limitation rather than criticism, since some principle of selection is necessary for a work of this type.

The book places considerable emphasis on the role of the researcher in designing, interpreting, and applying social research for action purposes. A separate chapter deals with "Presentation and Application of Social Research." The reviewer considers this broader treatment of the role of the researcher a desirable trend in view of the realities of social research today. A necessary part of this emphasis is a consideration of the role of the researcher's own values in social research. In this connection, the authors repeat a view that is becoming common: that "Since . . . personal values inevitably influence the choice of topic, the only means by which the rationality of scientific procedure is maintained is the awareness of where and how they enter."

This reviewer has seen no sound evidence that the researcher who makes his own values explicit will necessarily do a better research job. The researcher's task of self-analysis is far more complicated than such statements imply. Further, the reviewer would prefer to emphasize outside tests of validity and re-

liability of research results rather than examining the researcher's motivation.

Some recent experience in studying industrial populations places in doubt the generality of the conclusion (Ch. 6) that as compared with the questionnaire the interview is ". . . the more appropriate technique for revealing information about complex, emotionally laden subjects or for probing beyond public attitudes to the more covert private sentiments." There is some reason to believe that the supervised, but anonymous, questionnaire may be superior to the survey-interview under some circumstances.

In a book of this scope a few lapses are to be expected. For example in a discussion (p. 2) of problems that do not require the research process the following statement is made: "If one wishes to know whether local meat prices have risen within the last week, one need only consult a butcher or a housewife." Anyone who has dealt with cost of living indices or with sampling problems will find this a strange statement for an introductory chapter on methods of social research.

Apart from some excusable minor lapses of this kind, the book as a whole is a sound statement of the best current practices. A very desirable feature is the emphasis on the constant interaction between research steps. There is frequent indication that the actual sequence of a piece of research may involve steps out of "logical" order or a re-doing of earlier steps on the stimulus of later steps. In this connection, chapters which are particularly good are those on "The Research Process," "Research Design," and "Analysis and Interpretation."

This book is likely to become a standard work in its field.

RONALD FREEDMAN



## A GEOGRAPHIC STUDY OF WORLD POPULATION<sup>1</sup>

**T**HE author of this book is a geographer, but much of it is not specifically geographical except in a very wide sense of the

<sup>1</sup> George, Pierre: INTRODUCTION A L'ÉTUDE GÉOGRAPHIQUE DE LA POPULATION DU MONDE. Institut National d'Études Démographiques. Travaux et documents. Cahier No. 14, Paris, 1951, 284 pages. 600 francs.