



# Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process

By Tim May



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The book is divided into two parts, with Part I examining the issues and perspectives in social research and Part II setting out the methods and processes. Revisions and additions have been made to Part I to take account of new ways of thinking about the relationship between theory and research, and values and ethics in the research process. These take on board advances in post-empiricist thinking, as well as the relations between values, objectivity and data collection. Where necessary, recommended readings and references to studies that form the bases of discussions throughout the book have been updated. In Part II, additions have been made to the chapter on questionnaires, and elsewhere new discussions have been introduced, for example, on research on the internet, narratives, case studies and new technologies. The reader will detect many other changes, the intention of which is to aid understanding by staying up-to-date with the latest innovations in social research. The chapters follow a common structure to enable

a clear appreciation of the place, process and analysis of each method, and to allow the comparison of their strengths and weaknesses in the context of discussions in Part I.

The clear writing style, chapter summaries, questions for reflection and signposts to further readings continue to make this book the ideal companion to social research for students across the social sciences. In addition, it will be recognised as an invaluable source of reference for those practising and teaching social research who wish to keep abreast of key developments in the field.



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## **Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process By Tim May Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #4359732 in Books
- Published on: 2001-09-26
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.40" h x .67" w x 6.70" l, 1.14 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 254 pages

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"This is the finest introduction to social research I have ever read. The second edition utilizes the same framework as the first but the content has been substantially revised. There are two sections: (1) issues in social research and (2) methods. 'issues in social research' covers the competing perspectives on research, the relationship between theory and research and considerations of ethics and values for the social researcher. 'Methods' are meticulously worked through from official statistics to comparative research via surveys, interviews, observation and documentary analysis. Each chapter contains summaries, questions to prompt reflection and suggestions for further reading. The writing is clear, concise and scholarly with the bibliography a delightful A to Z compendium of the best in sociology." - BSA Network "The overall presentation of the text is hard to fault as each chapter is well written and difficult concepts are introduced and explained meaningfully without oversimplification...it offers the student and novice researcher an excellent overview of this crucial area in the health and social sciences." - Medical Sociology Newsletter

### **About the Author**

Tim May is Professor of Sociology at the University of Salford. His writings include *Probation: Politics, Policy and Practice* (1991) and *Situating Social Theory* (1996), both published by Open University Press. He has also written, with Malcolm Williams, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Research* (1996), and with Zygmunt Bauman, *Thinking Sociologically* (forthcoming 2001). He has co-edited, with Dick Hobbs, *Interpreting the Field: Accounts of Ethnography* (1993), with A. Vass, *Working With Offenders: Issues, Context and Outcomes* (1996), and with Malcolm Williams, *Knowing the Social World* (1998), and is editing *Qualitative Research: An International Guide to Issues in Practice* (forthcoming 2002). He is editor of the Open University Press series, *Issues in Society*.

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