



Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method (Sociology for a New Century Series)

By Charles C. Ragin, Lisa M. Amoroso

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Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method, Second Edition is a concise, innovative text designed for Research Methods courses in the Social Sciences. The main goal of this *Sociology for a New Century Series* text is to show unity within the diversity of activities called social research. The first part of the book tackles questions like "What is social research?" "How does it differ from journalism, documentary film-making, or laboratory research in the natural sciences?" and "What is the researcher's obligation to those he or she is studying?" The book also covers the how the various goals of social researchers shape the strategies they use and the representations of social life they construct. The latter part of the book is structured around the typical emphases of each tradition: qualitative research on commonalities, comparative research on diversity, and quantitative research on relationships among variables. These are not rigid divisions and research designs often blend aspects of each tradition in creative ways. Regardless of the approach, the process of representing social life through research involves a dialogue of ideas ("theory") and evidence ("data"). The model of social research put forth by Ragin and Amoroso is not as restrictive as the scientific method and encompasses social research ranging from research examining the complexities of everyday life to research investigating the power of transnational processes.

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- Sales Rank: #820162 in Books
- Brand: Brand: SAGE Publications, Inc
- Published on: 2010-07-14
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 6.00" w x .75" l, .75 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 248 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

The primary goal of Charles Ragin, social scientist and innovative methodologist, is to develop methods that help students and researchers unravel causal complexity in their research. This has led to his developing and championing the use of set-theoretic methods in the social sciences, most notably, his Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and fuzzy set analysis. In a recent review article in *Contemporary Sociology* entitled "The Ragin Revolution" (Vaisey review), sociologist Stephen Vaisey describes Ragin's work as a "principled alternative" to quantitative analysis (which assumes away casual complexity) and qualitative case-based methods (which lack tools for generalizing across cases.) Many who have adopted Ragin's methods believe that these techniques combine the strength of both quantitative and qualitative methods, while transcending their limits.

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Jeanne Pratt:

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