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UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL RESEARCH

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The author has been working in the field of science philosophy and research methodology for more than a decade.

"Understanding social research" is a replacement for "Basic concepts in the methodologies of social sciences" by Johann Mouton and HC Marais. This new edition is more user friendly. The aim of the book is to bridge the gap between a philosophical and technical perspective on research. The idea is to use the book in combination with a textbook on research methodology. Using the book in this way all social sciences will benefit to use this new book. The complimentary nature of qualitative and quantitative research is emphasised in the book.

The book is divided in four parts. Part 1 addresses the development of a conceptual model of social science. Chapter 1 focuses on multiple worlds. The author uses many metaphors to explain the world of social science. Chapters 2 and 3 explain the kinds of knowledge and scientific knowledge in a very logical but simple manner. The nature of scientific research and research as a journey are discussed in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 6 to 9 focus on the different dimensions of social science research, namely the epistemological -, methodological-, sociological- and the ontological dimensions. Part one is completed by the discussion of an integrated model of social science.

Part 2 addresses the logic of the research process. This part is introduced by a discussion of the process of social research in chapter 11. The logic of research, inductive and deductive reasoning and the types of reasoning in social science are explained in chapters 12-14.

Part 3 explains the stages of the research process. The following stages are discussed in chapters 15 to 26, namely

- Formulating the research problem
 - Formulating the research objective
- Research design
 - Conceptualisation (Defining key concepts)
- Conceptualisation (Formulating research hypotheses)
 - Operasionalisation
- Sampling
- Data collection (Data sources, reactivity and control)
- Data collection (sources of error)
- Data collection (Ensuring reliability)
- Data analysis and interpretation)
 - Writing a research report.

Part 4 focusses on the building blocks of science. Chapter 27 explains scientific concepts. Chapter 28 addresses definitions and empirical statements The last chapter explains typologies, models and theories.

All the chapters are very short and provide a division for critical reflection and assignments.

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