



Methods, Sex and Madness

Julia O'Connell Davidson

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Social research yields knowledge which powerfully affects our daily lives. The 'facts' it generates shape not just how we see ourselves and others, but also whether or not we see the existing status quo as normal, just and legitimate. This book examines and questions the methods used by social researchers to produce such knowledge. It focuses chiefly on research into human sexuality and madness. It introduces and critically assesses everything from survey methods to participant observation. It opens up broader philosophical debates about the nature of knowledge, and highlights issues surrounding the ethics and politics of research. The book looks at the research community and the research process in detail before moving on to examine the main techniques used in social research:

- * the use of official statistics
- * the survey method
- * interviewing
- * laboratory observation
- * ethnography
- * the use of documentary sources
- * textual analysis.

By exploring both technical and conceptual problems in the work of researchers like Freud and Kinsey, and by considering the difficulties faced by researchers concerned with phenomena such as rape, witch hunts and prostitution this book makes methodological issues both interesting and accessible.



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