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As the title suggests, this book is about both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. It is not a ‘technical’ research methodology textbook. Instead it provides a conceptual discussion of the main themes of social science research. The student is supplied with a systematic coverage of a full range of topics related to research in the social sciences. The early chapters (two to four) provide a description of issues, research questions and data in both qualitative and quantitative traditions. This is done in a balanced and unbiased way that is not realised in some volumes that attempt to combine the two approaches in one text. Chapter two focuses on describing some of the central issues of the research process, such as the description and explanation of data and matching methodology to research questions. An entire chapter is dedicated to the central concern of developing research questions and the role that they play in the research process (chapter three). Students are then instructed on the ways that research questions are related to data (chapter four) and this serves as an introduction the subsequent chapters on research design, data collection and analysis.

These themes are covered firstly for quantitative and then qualitative research (chapters five to ten). Despite the separation of the two traditions in these later chapters, Punch continues to draw comparisons between qualitative and quantitative approaches which allow the student to appreciate not only the distinctions but also the similarities. The quantitative chapters cover research design, independent and dependent variables, experimental design, correlation and causation (chapter five); measurement, reliability and validity, survey design, sampling (chapter six); and a range of statistical procedures used in the analysis of quantitative data (chapter seven). The qualitative chapters begin with a discussion of the diversity of research within this tradition and this theme is embedded in the descriptions that follow. The chapters include a comparison of different approaches to research design in qualitative research, including case studies, ethnography and grounded theory (chapter eight); conducting interviews, collecting observational data, and document analysis (chapter nine); and coverage of a diverse range of qualitative data analysis methods (chapter ten).

Despite the inclusion of chapters on the analysis of data they are more about the description of analytic procedures rather than instructions on how to analyse data. It needs to be strongly emphasised that the provision of a technical guide to doing data analysis was never the aim of the author. He states very clearly on p. 1 of this text: “it is not a ‘how to do it’ book, but aims instead to develop a basic understanding of the issues involved and of the ideas behind the main techniques”.

Punch is located in an Australian university (University of Western Australia), however it is not an Australian research methods text. This is undoubtedly the result of a pragmatic decision to make it suitable for the international market. As a textbook aimed at upper level undergraduate students and beginning graduate students in social sciences, it doesn't have many of the pedagogical features that one might expect. There are no practical exercises or review questions, however there are a group of 'review concepts’ at the end of each chapter. Also included are lists of further reading which are considerably outdated for a book published in 2005. Yet this is not reflected in the content of the chapters, which cite recent research and information published since the first edition of this text was printed in 1998.
At the end of the text is a somewhat underdeveloped glossary of key terms (p. 289) which is not a comprehensive list of all the terminology used in the text, however the author recognises this in the preface when he says it is not a ‘full-scale’ glossary. It also has a 3 page appendix on quantitative analysis with SPSS which makes reference to the statistical procedures described in chapter seven of the text. This appendix provides the student with a point and click guide to a range of statistical procedures for which, in the context of this text, they have never learnt the technical aspects of. This can be likened giving the keys of a new sports car to someone who has only ever read a book on the road rules and never driven before. In both cases, these are risky if not dangerous permissions to drive.

It is stated that this text is aimed upper level undergraduate and early graduate studies. In an ideal world students would have already learnt the information contained in this book by this stage of their education. This of course is not always the case. For those students who are coming late to research methods in their education and do not need the pedagogical ‘bells and whistles’ of first-year methods texts, this book will provide them with a sound grounding in research methods. One of the greatest strengths of this text is Punch’s ability to elucidate complex concepts and methods in plain English. It makes a good text for a foundational research methods subject.

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