

Methods of Family Research by Theodore N. Greenstein.

Book Review:

Methods of Family Research by Theodore N. Greenstein. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006 edition, 216pp.

Methods of Family Research is an excellent tool for advanced undergraduate and graduate students in Family Studies, Human Ecology, Home Economics, Sociology, Gerontology and related programs. Methods of Family Research focuses on teaching students how to produce research, by teaching them how to consume research in a sophisticated, effective manner. Written in a clear, concise style, this book introduces the basic concepts of social science research methods without excessive technical details. The text covers traditional quantitative methods, qualitative methods, and the mixed-method approach and uses real-life examples to address issues family researchers deal with every day. Fourteen chapters in this book are: 1. Why do research on families; 2. Causal inference in family research; 3. Searching and reading the literature; 4. Using the internet to study families; 5. How do we measure concepts? 6. Quantitative methods; 7. Qualitative methods; 8. Mixed methods; 9. Sampling issues; 10. Working with scales and indices; 11. Analyzing data on families; 12. Using other people's data; 13. Evaluating family programs; 14. The ethics and politics of family research. The first edition was published in 2000 and the second edition in 2006. Methods of Family Research is unique for it provides a quick review to students the basic and common understanding of the research procedures step by step and the results they encounter. Unlike other methodology textbooks that are full with sophisticated (and sometimes scaring) mathematical equations and statistical formulas, this book details research process from its very beginning to the conclusion of findings in simple and down to earth language. It also tells stories about researches done by students, using them to illustrate concepts as they are discussed. "The goal of this text," as said by the author in the Preface, "is not to teach you to be a researcher... Instead, this text is aimed at helping you become an intelligent and critical consumer of research on families," and "by the time that you finish this text, you should be able to read and evaluate published reports of research on families." Although the book is written with students of family studies in mind, it can be easily appreciated by all students in other social science disciplines. Since family is an indispensable part of the elderly life, students in gerontology can find this book useful when they plan and carry out their research assignments. One nice feature in the book is the study questions at the end of each chapter for review and application of the concepts discussed.

--Reviewed by Wen-hui Tsai
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