

RULES OF SOCIOLOGICAL METHOD

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FIREBAUGH'S SEVEN RULES OF SOCIOLOGICAL METHOD

1. There should be the possibility of surprise in social research
2. Look for differences that make a difference, and report them.
3. Build reality checks into your research.
4. Replicate where possible.
5. Compare like with like.
6. Use panel data to study individual change and repeated cross-section data to study social change.
7. Let method be the servant, not the master.

TO BE REPLACED WITH:

1. (Always replicate existing research and) show that most of your results are unsurprising.
2. Science is always about weak effects. (Moderately) strong effects are obvious and do not need further research.
3. Science is about causality. Do not even begin a statistical analysis without having a causal model in mind.
4. Always replicate existing research.
5. Compare.
6. Use panel data to study individual change and repeated cross-section data to study social change. (Use panel data also to separate individual change from measurement unreliability.)
7. Never trust a methodological authority, but be your own methodological master.

TO BE ADDED:

8. Reliability is a greater concern than validity.
9. First examine the correlation matrix.