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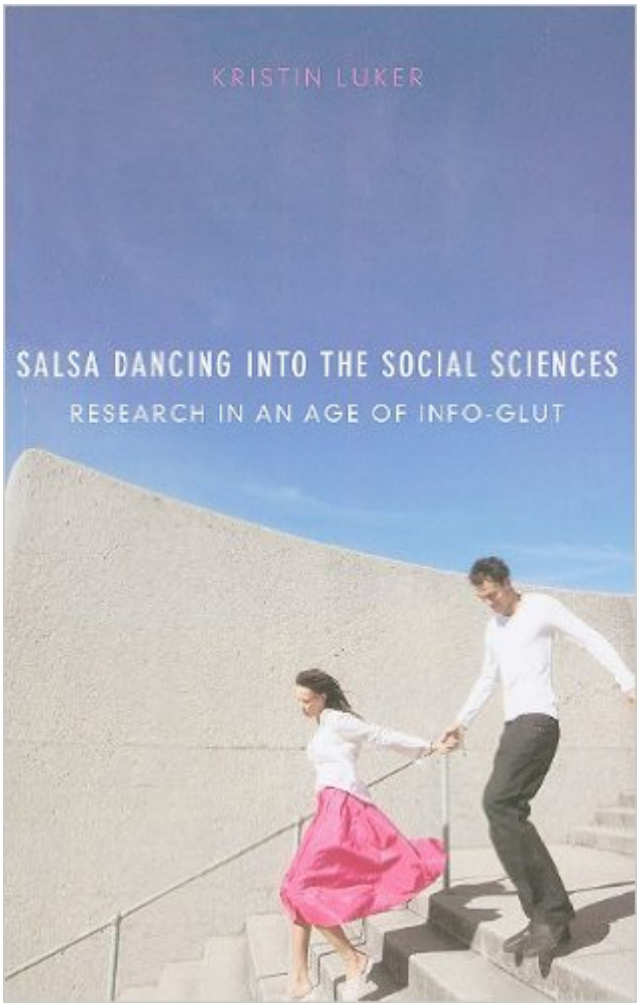
Salsa Dancing Into The Social Sciences: Research In An Age Of Info-glut



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Synopsis

â œYou might think that dancing doesnâ ™t have a lot to do with social research, and doing social research is probably why you picked this book up in the first place. But trust me. Salsa dancing is a practice as well as a metaphor for a kind of research that will make your life easier and better.â • Savvy, witty, and sensible, this unique book is both a handbook for defining and completing a research project, and an astute introduction to the neglected history and changeable philosophy of modern social science. In this volume, Kristin Luker guides novice researchers in: ,Knowing the difference between an area of interest and a research topic ,Defining the relevant parts of a potentially infinite research literature ,Mastering sampling, operationalization, and generalization ,Understanding which research methods best answer your questions ,Beating writerâ ™s block Most important, she shows how friendships, non-academic interests, and even salsa dancing can make for a better researcher. â œYou know about setting the kitchen timer and writing for only an hour, or only 15 minutes if you are feeling particularly anxious. I wrote a fairly large part of this book feeling exactly like that. If I can write an entire book 15 minutes at a time, so can you.â •

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an interesting and very different book about doing research. Let’s start with some unequivocally positive points: it is beautifully written - not at all like a recipe book but rather a stroll with the author, in which she dispenses her wisdom, in the manner of craftsperson to apprentice. There’s lots of anecdote and example and you get to feel that you know the author quite well by the

end of the first chapter. She becomes a friend.Or not, depending on your predilection in friends. In fact, I did like her, but I wouldn't want to spend more than a day in close company with her. (Rather like my parents in this respect.) She is assertive, has spent all her life in the academy, has a husband who went to Harvard, runs her doberman in the park - and she is pretty sure that she is right on most things, so there is a distinctly parental tone to the advice being given: a distict lack of diffidence - and JBS Haldane's 'duty of doubt' is nowhere in sight. This may be an unfair summary of what she is really like, but it's what comes over from the text. You may find the repeated use of the salsa dancing metaphor irritating and confusing. Confusing, because it is used in its literal sense (go out and salsa to get the neurons firing) and it is used as a proxy for interpretative research (a term that isn't used in the text at all, in fact). And paradoxically I felt that the book would be difficult for new doctoral researchers (to whom it is targetted). The thing about an apprentice is that you are standing next to the craftsperson, can watch and ask questions. By contrast, when things are presented in print in a loosely structured, narrative way it is difficult - unless you already have a lifetime of experience with which to contextualise the narrative - to know where on earth you are.

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