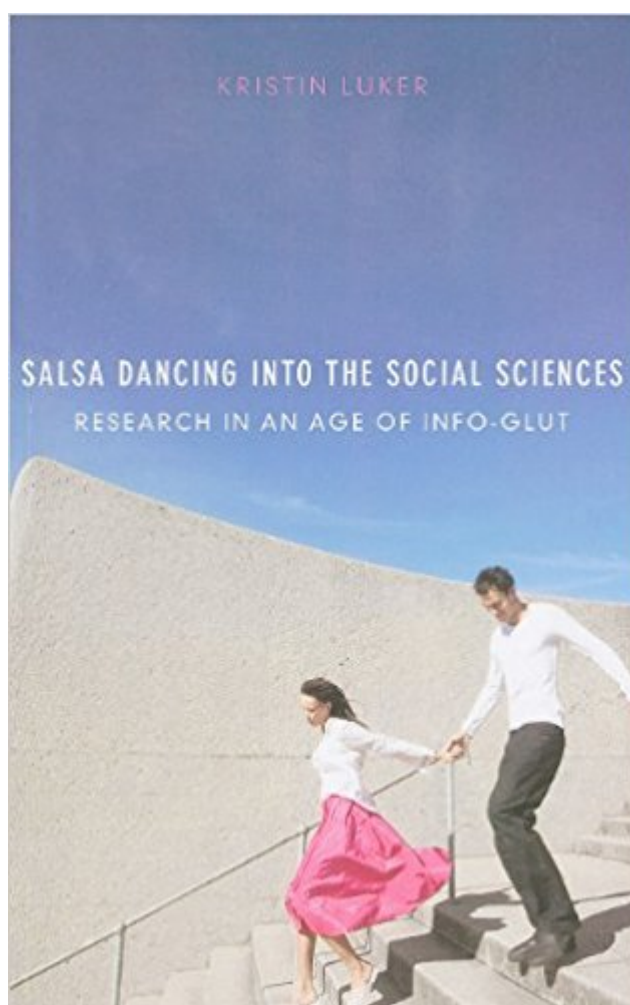


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# Salsa Dancing Into The Social Sciences: Research In An Age Of Info-glut



## Synopsis

“You might think that dancing doesn’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. 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 writer’s block

Most important, she shows how friendships, non-academic interests, and even salsa dancing can make for a better researcher. “You 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.”

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Luker’s book offers a startlingly original and unorthodox take on how to teach research methods, and is funny accessible, and inviting too. It gives a down-to-earth view of how knowledge evolves, how good research questions gel, and how to go about creating a research design. I cannot wait to

be able to assign it to my students. (Michelle Lamont, Harvard University) An irreverent and engaging mixture of memoir, history of research methods, and 'how-to' manual, Luker's book is chock-full of helpful suggestions to turn an idea (even a half-baked idea) into a meaningful and rigorous research project. The conversational style, the witty style, and the metaphors sprinkled through the pages make the ideas come alive. (Rebecca Klatch, University of California, San Diego) Kristin Luker has managed to produce a charming and effective manual on how to get through the research process with most of one's enthusiasm still intact. This is a guidebook for the methodologically bewildered, with an attractive blend of homespun wisdom, illustrated from her own research career, as well as glimpses of herself, her family and her enthusiasms – of which the salsa dancing of the title seems to be one – threaded through a lucid and accessible discussion of the elements of research practice. Although it will be a comforting and useful read for postgraduates, which is its intended market, it is already on my undergraduate recommended list. This is a refreshing and well-judged guide produced by an engaging writer in touch with a long career's lessons and the changing realities of researching today. For young researchers undertaking their first project or beginning a dissertation, it should prove an excellent guide. The book sets out to rethink the existing conventions of research practice – A great deal of the book's attractiveness lies in its refusal to pursue the grandiose and the ineffable. Endorsing what used to be called 'theories of the middle range,' this approach eschews master narratives and grand theory. A little modest realism about what the aims of social research can be, and ought to be, rather than inflated claims and rhetoric in pursuit of what it hoped to be for so long, goes a long way, and makes for a book that will, I suspect, generate a spirit of optimism in those who fall for its down-to-earth charms – Above all, however, this is a book to enjoy – and for a text on method this is rare indeed. Really enjoyable writing among social scientists is itself, unfortunately, a rarity, and it is a pleasure to welcome into the canon someone who celebrates the teaching role as well and successfully as Luker. Her determined cheer is a tonic, and a perspective well worth fostering in every student approaching the social-research process. More than that, however, she has developed a robust, effective approach to the conduct and practices of research and to the question of how one should prepare for research. (Leslie Gofton Times Higher Education 2008-11-27) I enjoyed this book very much and I thought it was one of the best books on the philosophy of the social sciences I have read, ever. (Tyler Cowen Marginal Revolution 2009-02-06)

Luker's book offers a startlingly original and unorthodox take on how to teach research methods, and is funny accessible, and inviting too. It gives a down-to-earth view of how knowledge evolves,

how good research questions gel, and how to go about creating a research design. I cannot wait to be able to assign it to my students. (Michele Lamont, Harvard University) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is remarkably unborring for a methodology book. It also helped me enormously to calm down and write my dissertation proposal, which I just handed in. I'm very happy to have read it. Other reviewers have some valid critiques-- there is a (too?) confident, parental tone, and the salsa metaphor doesn't work all that well if you don't like or know about salsa dancing. On the other hand, she really is trying to make a case for how to do research that is going to be acceptable to "the canonical social scientist" (which, at least in my sociology department, is most faculty members) and still let the data speak for itself. In other words, if you're planning to do something qualitative, or if you want support for ideas that won't be immediately recognizable to established (quant-oriented) researchers as a legitimate project, DEFINITELY read this. Even if you're super into quantitative methods and want some help working out your question in relation to theory, you should read it. Best 17 bucks I've spent this year.

As a PhD student and adjunct lecturer this book has provided further understanding into the research process, with a metaphorical structure that I am still trying to understand. It is a very good resource to have as it provides alternative ways of approaching research in combination with solid pathways for constructing a research project.

This book is a quick and enjoyable read. Luker provides great tips for conducting qualitative research and how to think about research in general. I highly recommend this book for students beginning their research career.

One of the most encouraging books about social science research I've ever read! I'm reading at the beginning of a degree and I'm so glad to have this profound, helpful advice to start off this project.

This book is a great way to brush up or be introduced into qualitative research short of reading a text book. The writing style is extremely engaging. It only took me a week to read, but what I learned in the book will stay with me for years!

Great, non-traditional approach to explaining qualitative methods, especially for those new to the

qualitative approach. We "canonical quants" definitely get a lot out of this book. I would definitely recommend it.

Luker has an easy yet intelligent writing style and the content is on the money- a great read for strategic and theoretical advice when doing inter-disciplinary or groundbreaking research in social sciences, psychology, or beyond.

GOOD!

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