

Profiles of Social Research: The Scientific Study of Human Interactions. Morton Hunt. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1986, 337 pages, \$17.50 hard.

Reviewed by Barry J. Martin, University of Toronto

This book attempts to depict, for those with no special knowledge of the social sciences, something of what social research is; to let them see it being done; and to suggest some of the values it may have for their lives.

The first chapter succinctly introduces the aims and methods of social research, including direct observation, indirect observation, surveys and experiments. The remaining chapters are narrative case histories from eyewitness accounts of recent significant episodes in social research. Basic methodological, practical, moral and political issues are raised. The five case histories are: a cross-sectional survey of the effects of segregated schooling; a new survey measuring the impact of the government's social programs on the American family; a series of lab experiments exploring the antisocial tendency of people working in groups to secretly do less than their best; two long-term studies, tracking nearly 800 people over many years, finding that many of our beliefs about human aging are incorrect; and a massive experiment testing a bold proposal to combat poverty through a guaranteed annual income.

Hunt's book is a unique and engaging one. It offers students and general readers an elaborate understanding of the scope and significance of the endeavors of social researchers.

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