



The Bondage of Mind by the Method Framework

Amirhosein Khandizaji

Tehran: Jameshenasan, 2011

(This book is originally published in Persian but here is its summary in English)

According to the definition of this book, a social research method is a collection of predetermined rules and instructions which tell researchers how to act or what to do during their research. Thus, all research methods have the following features: 1. They all prescribe a series of instructions. 2. These instructions are written and determined before researchers start their research. 3. Choosing any of these methods obligates a researcher to stay faithful to its rules. Therefore, since this book believes that social researchers should be free in their research, it criticizes all predetermined social research methods which obligate researchers to stay in the framework of a special method and follow its rules and instructions. I am aware that criticizing all prewritten social research methods while mainstream sociology is interested and fascinated by them sounds uncanny. It is obvious that no knowledge can be attained without method, but this method should not be written and determined before research.

This book argues that using predetermined research methods can lead to alienation of researchers. Marx talks about the alienation of workers in the capitalist production system. Workers in the capitalist system have no control over the products they produce, the way they produce products, and the way their products are sold in the market. As a result, they are alienated from their work, their products, and even themselves. Therefore, on the one hand, they are not satisfied with their job and on the other hand, their job turns into a boring and exhausting activity. The same alienation can take place when we use predetermined research methods. But this time, instead of workers, researchers are alienated from their research. After choosing a research method we have to obey and follow its rules during our research. We are like the workers who have no control over the process of production and have to follow the rules and instructions which are written for them. Besides, a prewritten social research method works like a production line which obligates workers to put special materials in their places which are already determined. This is why using such research methods can weaken the creativity of researchers. Any kind of distortion from the instructions of a special research method can be considered as an error. In this way, since researchers don't have much freedom in their research, they will be alienated from themselves and their work. They may not feel completely satisfied since their research is not completely their product.

Another result of these social research methods is the standardization of researchers and their research. After the standardization of the masses, now researchers should also be standardized. By using each prewritten research method which consists of special rules and instructions we create mass thinking. All the researchers who are using the same research method have to obey and follow the same rules which are prescribed by that special method. In this way, all those researchers act in the same way since their thinking is canalized by a special research method that they chose.

Today the validity of a social research is judged according to the method which the researcher used and the level of his/her loyalty to the rules and instructions of that special method. Therefore, any kind of research which doesn't follow the rules of social research methods can lose its validity. According to this book, social researchers should not be obligated to accept prewritten research methods and follow their instructions. They must be free to attain their knowledge in any way that they think is better for their study. The freedom of researchers to choose among different predetermined research methods is not a real freedom. It is like the freedom of servant to choose his lord. Real satisfaction of researcher can only be achieved in conditions of real freedom. As the researcher is not free when he/she follows the instructions of research method, he/she can never be completely happy with his/her research. In fact, prewritten research methods turn researchers into robots which are planned and programmed to do special jobs. As mentioned before, I am not saying that social research can be done without a method. However, this method should not be predetermined.