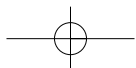
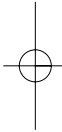
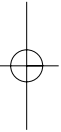
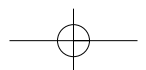
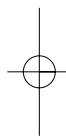
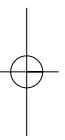


# Making Sense of Social Research





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Malcolm Williams



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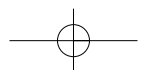
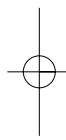
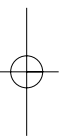
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## Preface

There are plenty of good research methods books around and when Chris Rojek suggested I write one, my first thought was, do we need another? Yet like most teachers of research methods I have never found quite the right book and in my mind the present book had an embryonic form even before Chris's suggestion. Because I believe strongly in the inter-relationship of theory and method I wanted to write a book that placed emphasis on this. I also wanted to write a book that spoke to the reader in a forthright and uncomplicated way, even if that meant some over-simplification in places. My own experience has led me to believe it's best to start with simple first principles, even if these have to be revised later. Finally, I wanted to write a book that was about social research as social *science*, because I believe that, despite its faults, science and its method have the potential to lead us to more reliable knowledge and the latter is an important requisite in all of our strivings to make a more just and equitable world.

To what extent I have managed to do these things the reader must decide. If I have not done so, it would not be for the want of support from friends and colleagues. Many have helped unwittingly in helping me write this book, most particularly the students I have taught over the years at the University of Plymouth and prior to this, City University and the University of North London. Some people have given me particular help in the writing and production process. Iain Wilkinson and Steve Miles kindly provided research examples. Liz Hodgkinson, Carol Williams, Sam Regan de Bere and Roger Sapsford read and commented on chapters, as did two anonymous reviewers. The latter two provided enormously helpful feedback. One of them hated the book, but nevertheless found time to do much of the proof reading (try to get out more is my advice!). Particular thanks to Tim May for friendship, inspiration and support; to Dave Byrne, Bob Carter and Ray Pawson for useful discussions and ideas; to Chris Rojek and Kay Bridger from Sage Publications for being supportive and efficient throughout the project. Finally, my love and thanks to Liz, Laura and John for being there and putting up with my occasional Irritable Male Syndrome!