

Davis

Data Inference in Observational Settings

Most social research is carried out in observational settings; that is, most social researchers collect information in the "real world" trying to do as little possible to alter the circumstances of study. However, there is a fundamental problem with this kind of research, in that it is very hard to draw "causal" conclusions, because of the complexity and obduracy of social reality. This is not just a problem for social scientists interested in policy or social action. It applies across the board more generally because it becomes difficult to know, without the conditions for credible inference, what conclusions can be drawn from any piece of empirical research that aspires to be anything more than descriptive of social phenomena. This four-volume set of readings introduces the reader to the advances that have been made in trying to help social researchers draw more credible inferences from investigations carried out in observational settings. Drawing from a variety of sources - from logicians and philosophers, to applied statisticians, computer scientists and econometricians, to epidemiologists and social researchers - this collection provides an invaluable resource for scholars in the field. Volume One: Background Volume Two: Analytical Techniques Volume Three: Temporal Relations Volume Four: Experimental Analogues



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