



# The Method of Response Functions in Psychology & Sociology

*I. G. Malkina-Pykh, Y. A. Pykh*

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**The Method of Response Functions in Psychology & Sociology** I. G. Malkina-Pykh, Y. A. Pykh  
Social (psychological and sociological) systems present considerable difficulties for modelers due to their complexity, multidimensionality, uncertainty and irreducibility. This book proposes that the method of response functions (MRF) be used as a method of constructing purposeful, credible and integrated social systems' models from data and prior knowledge or information.

A semi-empirical, or "grey-box", MRF model may be regarded as a trade-off between a knowledge-based model and a "black-box" (empirical) model. It may embody all the existing knowledge on the process (or a part thereof) and, in addition, it relies on parameterized functions whose parameters are determined from measurements.

Observations contain hidden information on the processes under consideration and one of the main purposes of the proposed method is to "extract" and describe these hidden relationships. Parameterization offers ways to couple qualitative with quantitative analysis. This combination makes it possible to take into account all the phenomena that are not modeled with the required accuracy through prior knowledge. Although only a simplified picture of the processes is modeled, a "grey box" system model provides some insight into the system processes. These processes are featured by chains of causality, highlighting stressors and variables responsive to stressors.

The method of response functions is a nonlinear regression method that implies credible models in the sense that they are identifiable and, hopefully, explain system output behavior satisfactorily.

For case studies the authors have selected the problems usually studied by psychologists and sociologists with statistical procedures, such as investigation of variance and discriminant analysis based on the general linear model or one of its multivariate generalizations (structural equation models, etc.); disordered eating and obesity; subjective well-being and alexithymia. An accompanying CD-ROM contains the demonstration versions of three models that are discussed in the various chapters.

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