sra : RESEARCH MATTERS

Social Research Association

Reaching survey respondents: old dog, new tricks

Three survey researchers share some of the innovative ways in which they are combining old and new communication technology to encourage survey participation.

Matt Jonas,
NatCen Social Research

Over the past three decades, digital technology has transformed all spheres of our lives, from how we communicate, to how we socialise, to how we shop. And, of course, it has changed how and where we collect information from the public.

The major change for research has been to methods of data collection. In many instances, online questionnaires now supplement or have entirely superseded paper, telephone and face-to-face interviews.

When we look at the major social surveys in the UK, this tends to have happened to the greatest degree on large longitudinal studies that use a sequential approach (Hannah Carpenter describes developments on Understanding Society below). We are also starting to see a trend for online follow-up panels recruited from face-to-face surveys, like the Taking Part survey or British Social Attitudes.

Despite this migration online, many of the UK's major studies remain solely face-to-face. The quaint practice of knocking on people's doors has some advantages: it helps to maintain continuity in longstanding datasets; it makes financial sense when some sort of physical measurement is needed (for example, collecting a blood sample or a meter reading); and face-to-face still achieves the highest response rates and most representative samples. There are many reasons why this method remains an attractive option for research funders.

However, preserving face-to-face data collection doesn't mean we should stand still with our supporting infrastructure. At NatCen Social Research, we are constantly examining how digital technology can support data collection, even if this hasn't gone digital.

We are currently testing the use of appointment reminders sent by text message on the European Social Survey. We hope this will help to reduce no-shows (of which there are a significant number), as well as knock-on effects to interviewer efficiency and response rates.

So will it work? We are optimistic for several reasons. We've already had a great deal of success using text messaging to encourage, for example, online survey participation and diary completion.

There's plenty of data from other contexts to show that text message reminders are effective at reducing appointment no-shows (in particular from the NHS). And, it responds to a fundamental part of human nature – forgetfulness. All our qualitative work with participants has told us that social surveys are very low on their list of priorities. It's our job to acknowledge that and find ways to encourage participation.

INSIDE

Gerry Nicolaas, Ipsos Mori

There is an increasing expectation from clients and the public that survey data should be collected online. There is a belief that this will cut costs and reduce respondent burden. There's also recognition that online technology can improve data quality by removing negative interviewer effects and by using interactive features to reduce respondent error.

Initially, online data collection was mainly considered for surveys in which email addresses were available. However, in recent years, we have seen a move towards online data collection in probability-based general population surveys (often known as push-to-web surveys). These surveys rely on the Postcode Address File as a sampling frame, and recruit by post. Alternative modes of data collection might be offered but only for those who do not respond to the request to complete the survey online.

Most of the existing evidence on how to increase response rates to postal surveys, such as Dillman's Tailored Design Method (TDM), can be applied to online surveys that use postal contact. At Ipsos MORI, we redesigned the mailing strategy of the GP Patient Survey using TDM, and managed to increase the response rate by seven percentage points without increasing costs.

But online surveys with postal contact have an additional hurdle compared to postal surveys: logging in to a computer and completing an online questionnaire is more onerous than filling in a ready-to-hand paper questionnaire.

So, further experiments are being carried out specifically for online surveys using postal contact. At Ipsos MORI, we are exploring different methods for increasing online response for the Active Lives Survey on behalf of Sport England, for example matching names to addresses, envelope design, pressure sealed letters, letter design and content, QR codes and SMS short codes. We have also been commissioned by the Fundamental Rights Agency to test an online survey using postal contact in 28 European countries which will include experiments testing respondent selection, incentives and letter design. The Office for National Statistics is undertaking an extensive research programme to support an online first approach using postal contact for its social surveys and the 2021 census. And finally, researchers elsewhere are also conducting similar work, including other European countries, the USA and Canada.

In July this year, Patten Smith and I will chair two sessions at the European Survey Research Association conference where we will bring these researchers together to share their findings. Don Dillman will open the first session with a review of the current state of the art, and we will conclude the second session with a framework for further research.

Hannah Carpenter, Kantar Public

A sequential mixed-mode approach with an online survey being the first option offered to sample members, and interviewers only used to follow up non-responders to the web survey, may provide the best of both worlds – the potential to offer cost savings whilst maintaining response rates through face-to-face follow up.

This mixed-mode approach was adopted for 40% of households on wave 8 of the UK Household Longitudinal Study, also known as Understanding Society. Fieldwork for this wave is ongoing, but early results suggest there is no damage to the overall response rate compared with face-to-face and possibly even a slight uplift thanks to the mixed-mode approach.

Having taken the plunge into online interviewing, the challenge for Understanding Society is to make this approach as cost effective as possible by maximising the proportion of individuals, and in particular whole households, completing the survey online and thus not requiring a visit from an interviewer.

Since wave 8 fieldwork started in 2016, Kantar Public, in consultation with ISER, has been experimenting with the approach to web fieldwork. Understanding Society lends itself to this kind of experimentation; as a batch of fieldwork starts each month, new approaches can be tested and evaluated fairly quickly.

One experiment tested a reminder letter and email (sent at the same time) compared with just an email. The addition of the letter had a positive impact. Another experiment compared two different types of 'early-bird bonus': one type promised adults an additional £10 incentive if they completed the online survey within the first three weeks of fieldwork, the other promised £10 each if all adults in the household responded online by the same deadline. The individual level bonus was slightly more effective as well as being easier to implement.

A third experiment tested two different web fieldwork lengths, one lasting three weeks with one letter reminder and two email reminders, and one lasting five weeks with two letter reminders and four email reminders. The five-week fieldwork period yielded higher web response rates.

For most experiments, additional investment has been required to fund new approaches, and so part of the evaluation of these experiments is to assess whether these additional upfront costs (for incentives or reminder letters) are at least offset – but preferably exceeded – by a reduction in face-to-face fieldwork costs because fewer households are issued to interviewers. The results of these and other experiments are helping us to shape the design of web fieldwork on Understanding Society to maximise web response and cost effectiveness.

Embracing technology in surveys

*SRA chair, **Patten Smith**, suggests that scrupulous social researchers should give a conditional welcome to the methodological opportunities emerging from new technology.*

As Matt Jonas says in his lead article, over the past three decades, digital technology has radically transformed how we interact with one another, including how we do research. This edition of SRA Research Matters features three articles on new technology and survey research. Representatives of the three largest contractors for government- and academic-sponsored high-quality survey research share the rather different ways they have recently exploited new technological opportunities in surveys. NatCen Social Research describes innovative methods for making contact with respondents in traditional face-to-face interviewing studies, whereas Ipsos MORI describes using more traditional contact methods when collecting data online. Kantar Public tells us how it blends traditional contact *and* data collection methods with technologically advanced equivalents in a flagship longitudinal survey.

As will be clear to the reader, all three organisations actively seek to embrace the new whilst remaining totally scrupulous about their research standards. This approach to using technology in surveys is exemplary. Surveys seek to obtain accurate estimates of behaviour and characteristics, and over the decades, statisticians and methodologists have painstakingly developed criteria for assessing this accuracy – criteria expressed in concepts like *sampling bias, sampling variance, non-response bias, reliability* and *validity*. These criteria are rooted in logic and statistics and, as such, are applicable to all survey methods, both old and new. What this means is that, as new survey methods are introduced, they have to be judged against these standard criteria, and that, when trying out a methodological innovation, we should always be asking ourselves questions like: do text message reminders help us control non-response bias? Does online administration improve validity and reliability? And what is its impact on estimate bias?

The previous paragraph should be seen as a statement of the obvious: the fact that most survey quality criteria were developed before recent technological changes does not render them otiose. Some people, however, regard them as inconvenient because taking quality criteria seriously is seen as hindering the researcher from reaping the full range of benefits that technology can offer. For example, if only we could give up our scruples about sampling bias and non-response bias, we could move our high-quality surveys wholesale to volunteer online panels with large resultant cost reductions. Unfortunately, in reality, data accuracy would be so reduced as to render many survey estimates unusable.

I believe the authors of our three articles have got the balance right, and all exemplify the conditional welcome scrupulous social researchers should give to the many methodological opportunities new technology offers us.

We are grateful to SRA trustee Ivana La Valle who for the past three years has very successfully led the volunteer editorial team for 'Research Matters'. Her dynamic and innovative editorship will, we are sure, continue under our new commissioning editor, Sarah Butt of City, University of London. Huge thanks to both!

SRA Scotland update

Sophie Ellison

Do keep an eye on the SRA website, follow us on Twitter (**@SRA_Scotland**) or join our LinkedIn group 'SRA Scotland's network for social researchers' to find out about upcoming training and events in Scotland.

SRA Cymru update

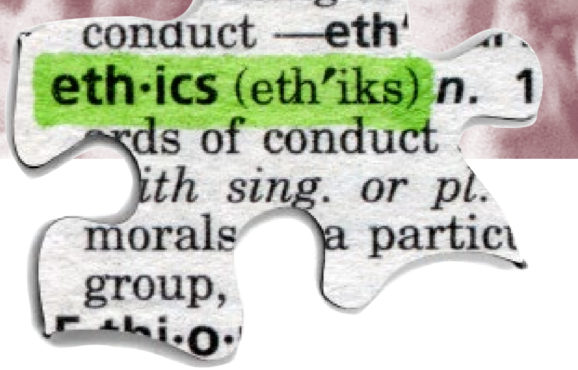
Faye Gracey

Very grateful to Dr Sioned Pearce (WISERD) for delivering an excellent and very topical evening seminar on research into 'Young people, devolution and territorial rescaling'. Really lovely to see so many of you there too. Please do keep in touch on Twitter: **@SRACymru**, LinkedIn: SRA Cymru – always great to hear from you. If you are interested in getting involved, we would love to hear from you: **faye.gracey@wales.gsi.gov.uk**

SRA Ireland update

Kieran O'Leary

Aoife Dineen has stepped down from the committee following a job change which means that she is no longer involved in research. The SRA Ireland committee thanks her for her work and valuable input. If there are any SRA members in Ireland who would like to become involved in the committee, please do get in touch! See the SRA website for further details of events. Email us on **SRAIreland@the-sra.org.uk** or follow us on Twitter **@SRAIreland**.



Free online research ethics resources

*By **Helen Kara**, SRA trustee*

I am pleased to bring you news of several free online resources for researchers grappling with ethical difficulties. The first is **The Research Ethics Application Database** (TREAD), originally set up by Martin Tolich at Otago University in New Zealand and now hosted by **The Global Health Network** and the Social Research Association. This database holds copies of successful ethics applications from around the world which you can search and use for inspiration and learning. Applications are anonymised, though the researcher(s) must be named. Researchers often submit accompanying documents, such as consent forms and participant information sheets, which can be very useful to look through for ideas. At present, there are 27 applications on the database, and we are keen to add more to help make formal ethical approval processes more accessible and less onerous. If you have an application you could submit, there is **information on the website** about how to share it using the database.

Then there's **The Research Ethics Guidebook** for social scientists, supported by the UK's **Economic and Social Research Council**, together with the **Researcher Development Initiative** of the National Centre for Research Methods, and London University's **Institute of Education**. Like TREAD, the Research Ethics Guidebook holds useful information about applying for formal ethical approval. However, it also covers other areas such as ethics in research design, conducting research, reporting and dissemination. The guidebook is ideal for reference at the start of a project, and also during research as unforeseen ethical dilemmas occur.

There are two free online courses in research ethics which are primarily geared towards health researchers, and focus heavily on participant wellbeing. Both have been through peer review and other quality assurance processes, and both offer certificates to students who complete the course successfully with a score of 80% or more. One is **Research Ethics Online Training**, which is adapted from an e-learning course and resource package designed and produced by the World Health Organization. It contains 14 individual modules, plus resources in the form of a glossary, a 'resource library' (aka bibliography), some case studies, examples of ethics guidelines, videos on research ethics, and links to other ethics websites. The second is **Essential Elements of Ethics**, adapted from an ethics toolkit created to support researchers at Harvard University in America. This course contains 11 modules, plus resources including a workbook and checklist of points to consider, and a discussion forum though this is not very active.

Free **research ethics modules** with a wider perspective are offered by Duke University in America. These cover topics such as cultural awareness and humility, ethical photography, power and privilege, and working with children. They are video-based with transcripts also available.

If you have an ethical question or dilemma that isn't covered in these resources, you can always turn to **the SRA's ethics consultancy forum**. This is a free service for SRA members who need support with particularly difficult cases. Nine people currently act as volunteer consultants, bringing a wealth of research experience from different sectors. If you want to present a case for consultation, you can email details to the forum's convenor, Ron Iphofen, at **ron.iphofen@gmail.com**. The work of the forum is confidential, and if you wish, your identity can be withheld from the volunteer consultants. Ron will circulate your case by email, and the consultants will respond to him with their views and suggestions. Not every member of the forum responds to every case – sometimes people are on holiday, or unwell, or just too busy – but most respond to most. Ron will collate the responses and send them back to you, usually within seven working days.

As there is rarely a hard-and-fast answer to any ethical question, you are likely to receive a range of responses that will guide you through those turbulent ethical waters. I would encourage all SRA members to keep the existence of the forum in mind for their research projects.

Social Research Practice

The fourth issue of Social Research Practice, the SRA's methods journal, will be published in August. Articles will include using corpus linguistics to interpret large amounts of qualitative feedback data; investigating ways of reducing non-response bias in face-to-face surveys; and action research on improving transitional care for young people moving from child and adolescent to adult mental health services.

We are already planning for issue five later in 2017 and issue six in 2018. We welcome further offers of articles. More information at: **http://the-sra.org.uk/journal-social-research-practice/**. Read the guidelines for authors, and download the template for an article. If you have an idea for an article but are not sure if it's suitable, please email Richard Bartholomew, the editor: **rabartholomew@btinternet.com**

The SRA interviews: Ben Page

***Ben Page**, chief executive of Ipsos MORI, shares his thoughts about the social research industry.*

TELL US ABOUT YOUR CAREER SO FAR

I studied modern history at Oxford, and didn't want to be a lawyer, accountant or anything corporate. I ran a nightclub at university. I moved to London and took the first job I could find advertised in Time Out magazine, as a telephone interviewer for MIL (now GFK). After a few months, I joined MORI's graduate trainee scheme expecting to stay a few years – that was 30 years ago! We were 40 people. We are now 1,300 in the UK and Ireland.

I worked across the business until the mid-1990s before specialising in public sector and government work. We did a management buy-out in 2000 and then sold the business to Ipsos in 2005. I led the Ipsos Social Research Institute for nine years from 2000, before becoming CEO of Ipsos in the UK and Ireland. So, I have worked across many areas but my main focus has been on social research for government.

WHO HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST INFLUENCES IN RESEARCH AND WHY?

Bob Worcester, the founder of MORI. He built a culture that is about curiosity, quality and doing the right thing for clients. He also focused on getting research used and communicating it effectively. He still comes to work every day, unpaid, in his 80s.

HOW HAS THE RESEARCH WORLD CHANGED IN THE PAST FEW YEARS?

The internet and smartphones mean we have vastly more data available more quickly than ever. We have behavioural and observational data available in ways that were not even imaginable when I started work – we can ask questions of people, but also get them to capture photographs, track their movements, look at what they are searching for and so on.

At the same time, being dependent on internet samples from panels or elsewhere has undoubtedly led to de-skilling in the industry. Many researchers now have little idea of how to construct a sample frame. Researchers who do most of their work online sometimes just assume their samples are representative, and look for significance testing to be done automatically without understanding the basis for either.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES AHEAD?

Staying relevant in the face of real time 'big data' and keeping down costs while maintaining quality. The main issue is that survey data, or traditional qualitative research, is increasingly only one part of a broader set of information that decision makers will be using. How researchers can integrate a wide range of data from a variety of sources will be key.

YOU'VE WORKED IN BOTH CORPORATE AND SOCIAL RESEARCH – HOW DO THEY COMPARE?

Social research sponsors continue to care about quality. In corporate research the key thing is speed and actionability – quality is seen as a hygiene factor. There is less interest, generally, in absolute accuracy in corporate research though there are always exceptions – for example media research studies still rely on face-to-face interviewing to get the best coverage.

YOU'VE HAD A LOT OF EXPERIENCE ON TV/RADIO – ANY TIPS?

You need to be able to express ideas succinctly live on air. You may need to simplify what the data shows without being misleading. Think what your three key points are and make sure you get them out with some pithy phrases to get people's attention. I always ask people to think of the 'Theresa May lift test' – you find yourself in the lift with the Prime Minister and she asks you, 'What does the latest survey on the NHS show?' You can't spend ten minutes on methodology in that situation!

A key thing to remember is that, unlike politicians, broadcasters aren't trying to 'trip up' researchers – they want to hear what the data means. And bear in mind that, like many things in life, the more broadcasting you do, the better you get.

WHAT PRACTICAL ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WHO IS LOOKING FOR A RESEARCH CAREER?

Get a good technical training and choose an area or technique to focus on – what are you going to know more about than anyone else? The more you know the more unique you will be. And keep learning – our industry is evolving rapidly.

SRA summer event: where now for the random probability survey?

Thursday 29 June, 2pm to 5pm

Wellcome Collection, London

Face-to-face survey fieldwork is widely perceived to be in crisis. Do ever-dwindling response rates signal the end for traditional probability methods, and if so can alternatives such as quota sampling or probability panels take their place?

- The facts about declining response: Patten Smith, head of Research Methods Centre, Ipsos MORI and SRA chair, and Keith Bolling, research director, Kantar Public
- The case for quota sampling: Roger Mortimore, director of political analysis, Ipsos MORI
- Random probability adaptations: Kirby Swales, director of the Survey Research Centre, NatCen Social Research
- From PAF to online panel: Alice Fitzpatrick, research director and Joel Williams, head of survey methods, both at Kantar Public
- The scientific assessment: Patrick Sturgis, director of the National Centre for Research Methods
- The clients' perspective: Siobhan Campbell, head of Central Research Team and deputy chief scientific advisor, Department for Transport

Chair: Ed Dunn, deputy director of ONS and head of Social Survey Division

£40 for SRA members (non-members £60)

Book your place here: http://the-sra.org.uk/events/

SRA annual conference: call for workshop presentations

Social research in a sceptical age

6 DECEMBER, BRITISH LIBRARY, LONDON

We are looking for abstracts for 20-minute workshop presentations for this year's annual conference.

The climate of scepticism towards 'experts' has put many research practitioners and users on the defensive. Is it enough simply to assert the value of rigorous methods, or should we be checking, sharpening and improving our tools? If 'post-truth' carries any meaning then the pressure is on researchers to find a positive response, such as clearly communicating our findings and why they matter; and demonstrating how high standards in design, conduct and analysis are built in to our research.

Keynote speaker: John Pullinger, national statistician

Plenary speakers:

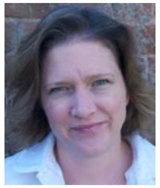
- Will Moy, director, Full Fact
- Suzanne Hall, research director, Ipsos MORI
- Professor Tim May, deputy director, Sheffield Methods Institute

Last year's annual conference attracted over 200 researchers from national and local government, research agencies and institutes, academia, and the independent and voluntary sectors, representing the full range of research methodologies.

More information about the conference and workshop presentations at: www.the-sra.org.uk/events

Understanding modern families: how can we improve the data infrastructure?

*By **Caroline Bryson**, Bryson Purdon Social Research LLP*



Our research needs to better reflect the families of today

Twenty-first century families are complex. We can no longer talk about the 'norm' of the two-parent family. Nor can we assume children grow up within a family structure which remains stable during their childhood. Rather, we live in a society in which one in six children is born into a family where their birth parents do not live together, and one in three children experiences their parents' separation during childhood. At any single point, three million children (26% of dependent children in England and Wales) are living in single-parent households, and a further one million (9%) are living with step-parents. But despite these facts and figures, the UK research evidence remains much stronger about those in more 'traditional' family structures, while the (particularly quantitative) data collected about 'blended' families (resulting from separation) remain limited. Too frequently, studies focus on the child's 'main' household, with non-resident parents (usually fathers) and their households treated as 'secondary' (with data usually collected by proxy from the resident parent). And the 'separated family' is too often viewed as the separated parents and their children, with insufficient regard for step-relatives. 'Parenting apart' is different from parenting when living together (for example co-parenting across households; parents' incomes supporting two households rather than one; the complexities of step- and half-relatives; and so on). Policymakers and practitioners recognise the need for bespoke support mechanisms for these families. Yet there is a lack of rich survey data about the lives of these families.

But this presents considerable challenges

We recently published findings from a scoping study which reflected on why we have these shortcomings in UK data, and how we might rectify this. Certainly, it does not appear to be due to a lack of interest among policymakers, researchers and practitioners. Rather, we conclude the paucity of data relates, in large part, to a combination of two issues: (a) competing priorities given restricted research budgets meaning that 'additional' data collection on or about 'second' families is not afforded and (b) methodological challenges of conducting robust research among separated families. These challenges include:

- Administrative data identify only subsets of separated families (such as benefit recipients; court users), limiting their usefulness for analysis or as a survey sampling frame for the wider separated-family population
- We rely on large-scale screening to identify separated families which is costly and prone to bias, particularly for non-resident parents: previous attempts resulted in considerable levels of under-identification
- The low prevalence of separation (around 2% of UK families with dependent children each year) restricts the achievable sample sizes for recently separated families – a crucial group to include if we are to understand the processes and effects of separation
- High attrition rates among separated families in longitudinal studies make retaining representative samples (especially of non-resident parents) challenging
- Capturing new forms of families/parenting requires substantial new question design and testing

Next steps

Given the importance of having data which reflect the full range of modern family structures, both to monitor policy interventions and to understand the society we live in, we must strive to overcome these challenges: we cannot conclude that it is simply all too hard. In the medium- to long-term we need additional longitudinal survey data collection (within an existing study or as a new one). Our report proposes three potential designs. However, given the substantial commitment required to any new data collection, we must first demonstrate that it can be done. Our recommended next step is a 'test and learn' period about how best to overcome the methodological challenges, and demonstrate to potential funders and data users the value of these data.

'Understanding the lives of separating and separated parents in the UK: what evidence do we need?' [**http://nuffieldfoundation.org/data-understand-lives-separated-families**] by Caroline Bryson, Susan Purdon and Amy Skipp with Anne Barlow, Tamsin Ford, Joan Hunt, Kathleen Kiernan, Hamish Low, Stephen McKay, Joanna Miles and Liz Trinder. The study was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, but the views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Foundation.

How can SRA members use the UK Data Service?

***Louise Corti**, associate director and **Matthew Woollard**, director, UK Data Archive, University of Essex*


If you've worked with UK government survey data in the last 50 years, you will probably have used us in the past, but most likely under a different name. Our organisation, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), is now called the UK Data Service, but many of our current activities were once done by the Data Archive. The important distinction between the old and the new is that the new UK Data Service is a *service* and not just an *archive*. We still provide access to data but also training and advice to researchers.

The data we hold

The major surveys we hold include: the British Social Attitudes survey, the Crime Survey for England and Wales, the English Housing Survey, the Health Survey for England and the Labour Force Survey and their predecessors, as well as many British longitudinal studies and European surveys. We have formal concordats with all the UK's national statistical institutes (NSIs), and longstanding relationships with many government departments, enabling us to provide access to their survey data in a timely manner. If we don't hold what you want, contact us, and we'll see what we can do.

If you've not visited the archive for some time you'll see from our website that we also hold many non-survey sources including aggregate statistics from intergovernmental organisations, and qualitative and historical data, typically derived from academic research grants. If you create data that you would like to, or are required to, onward share you can speak to us about doing this for you.

We try to ensure that data are open when possible and closed when necessary. What this means in practice is that we apply the most suitable access pathway for data depending on the risk of disclosure of personal information. Data access generally falls into one of three basic categories: open, safeguarded or controlled. Open is self-explanatory; safeguarded means that after registration and a user agreement, you can download data to your desktop. Controlled data needs more stringent conditions, including working in our secure lab.

We are often asked what the difference is between a safeguarded and a controlled dataset for the same survey. It's often that there is at least one key variable that (when used in conjunction with another) makes the dataset potentially disclosive, such as fine-grained geography such as postcode or five-digit standard occupational classification (SOC) code. Our secure lab enables accredited researchers (through training) to use these types of data under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 so long as their proposed project is approved by the data owner as meeting public-good criteria. These procedures are much harder to operate for independent and commercial users who have no public affiliation, though not impossible. For all researchers, the application process can be protracted, and a proposed project may not be approved. So we advise users to first check carefully the safeguarded versions of the same data, which may be just as useful for their analysis.

Data access and costs for non-academic researchers

The UK Data Service is funded mainly to provide a service to social science researchers within higher education (HE), but we also provide data access to researchers outside HE when possible. If anyone is carrying out research and teaching in a not-for-profit capacity, we don't charge for data access. You will have to register, provide an intended usage and assert whether it's for non-commercial or commercial use. In some cases, commercial access is allowed, and we levy a small administration fee to cover the preparation of a contract.

How to find out about data releases and relevant events

The UK Data Service has the usual communication channels including a subscription list, an e-newsletter, Twitter, Facebook and blogs. We also host outreach and training events, some by webinar. Our most recent training is appealing to social science researchers to consider learning more about approaches to data analytics.

Resources

UKDS catalogue: **http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk**

UKDS communications: **https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/news-and-events**

UK Data Service

Getting ready for the next census

***Ben Humberstone**, acting director, 2021 census, Office for National Statistics*

It may still be four years away, but at the Office for National Statistics (ONS) we're already busy planning for the next census in 2021. We recently reached a major milestone in our preparations by carrying out a large-scale census test.

The test involved 100,000 randomly-selected households across seven local authorities in England and Wales, and 100,000 more across the rest of the two countries. The main test areas were chosen to include areas with hard-to-count populations and places that have poor internet access. We selected a mix of rural and urban areas. We sent a letter to the households involved asking them to complete an online questionnaire using a unique access code, or to fill in a paper questionnaire.

What we tested

One of the main things we used the test for was to evaluate proposed questions for 2021. Over the last few years, we've been busy reviewing the topics included in the census. This is to make sure these topics meet the changing needs of those who rely on the data.

We held a public consultation on potential census topics in 2015, and received more than 1,000 responses from organisations and individuals. This consultation identified user demand for more information on sexual identity. As a result, the main component of the 2017 test included a split sample of questionnaires with and without a sexual identity question. This was to assess the effect, if any, on responses to this question and the questionnaire as a whole. More at **https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/progressanddevelopment/questiondevelopment**

We're conscious of the need to get the balance right on the questionnaire. It's about giving users the information they need whilst making sure we maintain response rates. The questionnaire also needs to be quick and easy to fill in.

Another change for 2021 is that the census will be predominantly online. The last census in 2011 was the first to offer the chance for people to complete their questionnaires over the internet. However, we know some people will need extra support to get online and complete a questionnaire. When choosing where to test, we factored in some areas that are 'digitally excluded', either through poor broadband connection or fewer people having access to the internet.

In a separate component of the 2017 test, we also tested an 'assisted digital' service with 8,000 households on the Isle of Wight. 'Assisted digital' involves offering appointments at local libraries where people can get help with filling in their census questionnaire online. We chose the Isle of Wight to test this as it has many older residents who may find it more difficult to get online. It's important we make sure the census is accessible to all.

Next steps

Throughout June and July, we're running a census test evaluation survey (CTES) with a sample of responding and non-responding households from the original test. Through the CTES, we're aiming to gather data to help us gauge people's understanding, ability, willingness and attitudes towards completing the census test online.

After that, we'll be analysing the results of the census test to help with planning for 2021. We'll also be comparing the results with evidence from public acceptability surveys which we're carrying out. We're aiming to publish our findings later this year.

Beyond 2021

As well as planning for 2021, we've been looking even further ahead. We're looking into the possibility of putting together a census based on linking together administrative data held by the public sector. By doing this, we can make the best use of data that's already available. If our tests of administrative data are successful, we'll be able to produce census-type statistics much more often. And we wouldn't need to ask people to fill in a census questionnaire every ten years. Using administrative data may also allow us to gather information on proposed topics that don't make it onto the census questionnaire in 2021, including income.

If you'd like to know more about our plans for the 2021 census and beyond, see **www.ons.gov.uk/census**

Better together: the value of collaborating

*By **Tina Haux**, lecturer in quantitative social policy and director of the Q-step Centre, University of Kent*

Assessing the work of academics has become an obsession of recent governments in the UK. Among the best-known assessments is the recent Research Excellence Framework (REF2014), which aims to evaluate the research activity and quality of universities. The REF2014 included impact for the first time as a key measure, a reflection of the coalition government's view that academics should prove their worth beyond their ivory (or otherwise) towers. The inclusion of impact has sparked a whole set of debates around the definition, attribution and measurement of impact. Controversial before the actual REF2014, impact has now become accepted as a measure of academic work and worth by the universities, and is very likely to feature again in the next national research assessment (see Stern Review 2016 **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-excellence-framework-review** and **http://www.hefce.ac.uk/rsrch/REFimpact/**).

For myself and many of my colleagues, making an impact beyond academia is a key motivation for our research. Impact was defined very broadly in the REF2014 but in my current study on the impact of the second generation of social policy scholars, impact is defined as *directly influencing policy*. Yet, this kind of policy-orientated impact requires regular engagement with different members of the broader policymaking community such as the voluntary sector and civil servants, a time-consuming activity. This is problematic as time has become a much scarcer resource in academia because of the rapidly increasing student numbers and teaching loads, and demands to perform well in a whole range of other assessments such as the National Student Survey and the new Teaching Excellence Framework.

That said, collaborations between academics, the voluntary sector and think tanks at a local, regional, national or international level, can not only be highly effective in achieving impact but can also be mutually beneficial because of our complementary strengths. Voluntary sector organisations and think tanks often have good working relationships with civil servants and MPs as well as networks with other voluntary organisations. In addition, they are often better versed in the current language, aims and constraints of policymakers, and can thus help translate findings and recommendations coming out of academic research to make them fit better with existing policy priorities. In return, academics can offer the voluntary sector their expertise in the subject, and have access to a different set of research grants, which is particularly valuable at a time when voluntary sector funding is strained. Many voluntary sector organisations regularly work with academics by engaging them as trustees or by organising events aimed at policymakers and inviting academics as speakers and to provide briefings.

The focus on impact is reflected in the need for an impact statement by many of the large grant-awarding bodies. Without knowing the outcome of a piece or programme of research, writing an impact statement is rather difficult. Instead, funders are looking for support for the proposed research as well as sophisticated ideas on dissemination and engagement. This has led to some very successful collaborations between academics and the voluntary sector, particularly when voluntary sector partners have been costed into the bid as that addresses the respective constraints of time and funding of both partners.

Another relatively new development that will further enhance the collaboration between the voluntary sector and academia is the Q-Step initiative (**www.nuffieldfoundation.org/q-step**), which has funded 18 universities to enhance the teaching of data analysis and interpretation skills to social science undergraduates. Many of the Q-Step centres include placements as part of their undergraduate programmes, another potential avenue for academics, students and the voluntary sector to forge closer links and to benefit from their respective expertise and access to data.

Much of this is not new. Many scholars have been engaged in regular dialogues with policymakers long before the REF. However, the instrumentalisation of impact as a measure of academic performance and, therefore, allocation of funding, as well as investment in programmes such as Q-Step, are new and, I hope, will lead to more successful collaborations between academics and the outside world.

Do you 'do impact'?

*By **John Hitchin**, director, Renaisi*

I've been asked this question, or a version of it, many times. What the questioner is asking is: do we at Renaisi help third sector and charitable organisations think about, understand, measure and manage their social impact?

The short answer is yes but the longer answer, which often comes during a project, involves interrogating what the organisation actually means by, and why it wants to 'do impact'. In these individual relationships, this can be a very positive and beneficial experience.

However, I think the discourse within the social sector as a whole about impact is a negative one which is reducing rather than increasing the likelihood of good social research or evaluation being done, and breaking the link between research and service improvement.

My problem with the current debate is that it is often led by models or methodologies rather than a question of *why*. The Standards of Evidence (SoE) approach, for example, first introduced into service evaluation by Dartington Social Research Unit (DSRU, 2010) and popularised by Nesta (Puttick and Ludlow, 2013), is an amended version of a Maryland Scale of evidentiary robustness (Farrington et al, 2002). The Maryland Scale is a valuable approach for appraising the quality of social research, but directly applying it to the work of organisations has some risks.

The main risk is that it prioritises a particular kind of question, knowledge set and specific truth claim. What do I mean by this? Well, the American evaluator, Eleanor Chelimsky, said that there are three reasons to evaluate: accountability, knowledge, and development (Chelimsky and Shadish, 1997):

1. Accountability evaluation: the standard government evaluation. It is concerned with value, with measuring the success of a project against its stated outcomes, and fits neatly with HM Treasury's Green Book. Its gold standard methodology might be a randomised controlled trial. Its truth lies in justifying funding, and that truth is evidenced through a value-for-money statement or an effectiveness claim.
2. Knowledge evaluation: the domain of the What Works Centres. It is not about whether specific pots of money have been well spent, but rather which ways of working are most effective in achieving policy objectives. It is used by academics and policymakers for future work, and it values meta-analysis of approaches: not, 'was this funding successful?', but 'is working in this way effective?'. Its truth lies in the ability to claim likely success for future work.
3. Developmental evaluation: strengthens and builds organisational capacity and insight. It is used by service managers or designers, and places value in feedback, observation and a triangulation of data. It is less independent, and it is almost impossible to generalise from its findings, but its truth lies in its realistic reflection of a service and its challenges.

The original Maryland Scale prioritises, by design, knowledge questions. But that doesn't really work for judging individual funding pots, and doesn't work for the kinds of questions about improvement that interest individual organisations.

The Nesta Standards of Evidence are probably the most influential in the social sector debates about impact, and they try to add accountability questions to knowledge questions. I fear this means falling between two stools. The resistance to assessing impact within the sector is that much of the current debate does not reflect the needs and work of individual organisations, and so they shy away from it. There are far fewer resources to support good developmental evaluation than there are for accountability or knowledge evaluations, and there is no system or structure to help organisations (and their funders) think about what good developmental evaluation looks like. This is a disservice to our collective work.

To 'do impact' well, therefore, we need to accept the strengths and limitations of the tools and frameworks that we have, and to collectively support questions, measures and systems for understanding what builds organisational capacity and drives impact. It won't always look like an accountability evaluation, but it shouldn't, because it is answering a different question.

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The Scottish approach to evidence: partnership and participation

*By **Pippa Coutts**, Scottish lead and project manager, Alliance for Useful Evidence*

The Alliance for Useful Evidence promotes the use of high-quality evidence to inform decisions, and supports sharing experiences between the four UK jurisdictions. This is important when policies are diverging across the UK, but, we have yet to capitalise on the opportunity of a 'policy laboratory' by comparing and sharing learning from the different stances emerging.

The Scottish Government describes its policy approach as the Scottish Approach, and articulates its vision for Scotland in the National Performance Framework (**http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms**). Concurrent to this vision, has been the push for the public sector to reform to prioritise preventative action, involve people in decision-making, work in partnership and measure performance against outcomes. Although the desire for an outcomes-focused government centred on people and communities is not confined to Scotland, what may be unique is the sense of shared benefits of such an approach between sectors.

The Alliance and Carnegie UK Trust work across the UK, and we are hearing that the Scottish Approach is having an impact on what constitutes useful evidence. For example, the seven UK What Works Centres focus on quantitative evidence and tend to use hierarchies to indicate evidence quality (for example The Education Endowment and Early Intervention Foundations), more so than the Scotland and Wales centres. What Works Scotland supports public sector reform, and follows an action research approach with four local authorities. The Scottish Government's focus on outcomes determines its relationship with local authorities, all of which must produce local outcome improvement plans with partners. This has implications for priority setting, for which there is a role for causal evidence, and in performance management, for which theory-based approaches may be more appropriate.

In 2016, the Alliance and Carnegie UK Trust began to explore whether there is a specifically Scottish approach to evidence use and generation, by consulting locally and publishing a discussion document: 'The Scottish approach to evidence'. We concluded that there is an emergent Scottish approach which takes into account the complexity faced by local authorities and service providers trying to move to outcomes-based programming whilst coping with financial pressures, and links evidence on outcomes for individuals with outcomes for programmes/services and national outcomes.

The 'Scottish approach to evidence', sets out five steps to developing this approach:

1. Support people working at all levels in the public and third sectors to use outcomes-based approaches, specifically the National Performance Framework
2. Generate more evidence for participative approaches to public services, such as co-production, asset-based working and preventative programming
3. Develop robust and appropriate research methodologies that support public involvement, working across disciplines, and partnerships between researchers and practitioners. Currently, there is little evidence on whether co-produced research increases research uptake, so there is a need to evaluate the ability of proposed research projects to increase the use of evidence
4. Help decision-makers at all levels identify and use a mix of high-quality evidence. To encourage this, we need to support decision-makers to understand what appropriate evidence is, and to support evidence users to match evidence to their needs
5. Learn from each other: developing a suitable evidence base is a shared cross-sectoral and cross-jurisdictional challenge

This approach is valuable beyond Scotland. It creates the possibility of putting citizen and community interests at the heart of public policy and practical research. For example, the focus on building partnerships between sectors and with communities implies that approaches to generating evidence and local decision-making need to be increasingly participative. It has led to concern about how to change the current systems, for example for public sector planning and audit, to ones which focus on co-production, participation and a continued use of improvement methodologies across sectors.

The challenge is to bring together charities, academics and public sector partners to build, and make accessible, a strong associated evidence base. The Alliance, an open access network of individuals from government, universities, charities, business and local authorities in the UK and internationally, has an important role: **www.alliance4usefulevidence.org**

Reference

Coutts, P. and Brotchie, J. (2017). The Scottish approach to evidence: a discussion paper. The Alliance for Useful Evidence and Carnegie UK Trust [online] Available at: **http://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/publication/the-scottish-approach-to-evidence-a-discussion-paper/** [Accessed 29/5/17]

Research implications of new UK and EU legislation

*By **Emma White**, head of administrative data, NatCen Social Research; associate director, ADRC-E; and deputy chair, MRS CGG*[1]

The processing of personal data is redefined and subject to new regulation under two laws due to come into effect in the UK in the next 12 months.

The Digital Economy Act (DEA) 2017 passed into law on 27 April. It includes provisions about electronic communications infrastructure, services and intellectual property; regulation of direct marketing; and data-sharing by public bodies. Its key provisions include:

- The Data Protection Act (DPA) 1988 remains in force
- Information held by a public body can be disclosed. However, in general, information cannot be onwardly disclosed unless there is a legal requirement to do so
- A clear legal basis and six conditions under which personal data may be shared. Personal information and conditions that allow it to be described as identifiable are defined, and a code of practice for data-sharing is introduced
- Data processors, disclosers and those to whom information can be disclosed including for research and review, as well as the research itself, must be accredited by (the Office for National Statistics on behalf of) the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA). Conditions for accreditation include that processors are fit and proper people and that research is in the public interest. The UKSA will publish a register of accredited people. Accreditation can be withdrawn
- The DEA does not cover health services or adult social care

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into effect on 25 May 2018, and will be implemented despite the UK's decision to leave the EU. It is broadly in line with the principles of the existing DPA and includes the following provisions:

- Data subjects have new and expanded rights. Organisations have increased obligations. Processes and sanctions are established for breaches. Personal data include online identifiers such as IP addresses, cookies and digital fingerprints. Sensitive personal data include genetic and biometric data
- Detailed consent conditions are described. Explicit consent is needed to process sensitive personal data. However, informed consent is not the only basis for data processing. Personal data for research purposes can be processed by relying on the legitimate interests of the data controller if the rights of individuals are not overridden
- There is a strong basis for research exemptions, including for private entities, under the special research regime which the UK is likely to adopt:
  - The exemptions apply to scientific research, including public health research, historical and statistical research, and archiving in the public interest. Each is treated separately and defined with examples
  - Exemptions include the principles of storage and purpose limitation so researchers can process personal data beyond the purposes for which they were collected
  - Other exemptions include that research may be a legitimate basis for processing without a data subject's consent or over an objection, for example if the activity is for reasons of public interest. Requests for erasure can be denied and notice deemed not necessary if research objectives may be impaired or rendered impossible. Broad consent for research purposes is feasible
  - Researchers must implement appropriate safeguards. These include technical and organisational measures such as privacy impact assessments or pseudonymisation to ensure that only the personal data necessary for the research purposes are processed
  - The provisions imply that recognised ethical standards must be complied with, while ethical principles underpin many of the rights and protections. Note that ethical standards for research based on administrative data, online data including social media, secondary data and big data are still a subject for debate

This article can highlight only some of the aspects of the new legislation relevant to research, and those only in brief. The GDPR in particular is complex, and its interpretation and implementation are still under consideration. The Information Commissioner's Office is producing comprehensive guidance on a modular basis, with some guides already available online.

All researchers using personal data and/or who seek to use data controlled by public bodies should review the new legislation now, and principal investigators should seek advice if in doubt about how to proceed.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Information Commissioner's Office data protection reform website: **https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-reform/**

Maldoff, G. 'How GDPR changes the rules for research': **https://iapp.org/news/a/how-gdpr-changes-the-rules-for-research/**

[1] NatCen Social Research; Administrative Data Research Centre for England (ADRC-E), University of Southampton; Market Research Society (MRS) Census and Geodemographics Group (CGG)

SRA surveys the membership

SRA trustees and staff are keen to hear from members, and we take a formal sounding of views in our biennial surveys of members. Responses are reviewed, and discussed at trustee meetings, with a view to making improvements. From what members told us in 2014, we developed Social Research Practice, the SRA online journal, and set up trial access for members to collections of social science journals. Here, we present findings from our latest (2016) survey, and compare these with the picture in 2014.

RESPONSE

Many thanks to everyone who took part in the survey. The written-in responses from members were thoughtful and detailed, giving trustees and staff plenty of rich information. 352 people replied giving a response rate of 37%, which is a bit higher than in 2014, but could be higher. Next time, we may try small and occasional batches of questions on specific topics, rather than a larger one-time survey.

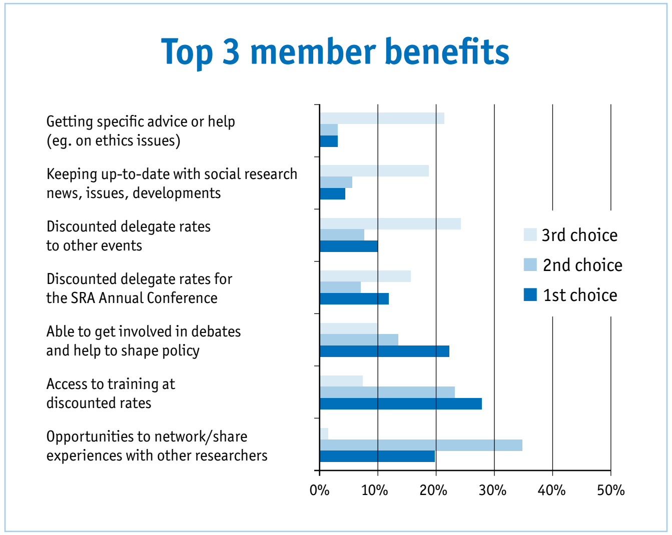
TRAINING

62% of respondents had received training in research methods or techniques in the past year, considerably more than in 2014 (45%). The two most common providers, as in 2014, were SRA (38%) and employers (24%).

Two-fifths of respondents had experienced a barrier to training in the last year, most commonly to do with costs/funding (41%), not being able to spare the time (15%), and the location of the course (13%). Trustees are considering what can be done about this.

BENEFITS OF SRA MEMBERSHIP

Members ranked membership benefits in order of importance. The chart shows the benefits ranked 1, 2 and 3 (based on 669 responses overall).



As indicators of member engagement, it is encouraging that 'opportunities to network/share experiences' and 'able to get involved in debates and help to shape policy' were rated highly (and higher than in 2014, when 'keeping up to date with social research news, issues and developments' was the top-rated benefit).

EVENTS

Replies to an open question about SRA events indicated that the most popular topics and issues which members would like to see covered are impact of research; big data; presentation of findings; quantitative and qualitative methods; and evaluation. This will help the SRA events group to plan ahead.

WEBINARS

85% of respondents said they would be interested in webinars. As a result, we are actively scoping out this approach, as we want SRA activities to be less London-focused.

PUBLICATIONS

The newsletter and Research Matters remain popular. However, it's a concern that most members haven't read our new journal 'Social Research Matters', largely because they weren't aware of it (62%). Clearly, much better publicity is needed.

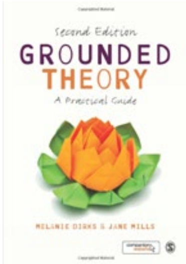
TWITTER

Just over half of respondents are on Twitter, and about half of them follow the SRA's Twitter feed (**@TheSRAOrg**). The most common reason for not following the SRA was 'I wasn't aware of it', which is an action point for us. This is useful information given that trustees and staff recognise that the SRA needs to build a broader social media presence across many outlets and channels.

VOLUNTEERING

We were delighted to receive offers of help from 85 respondents. One result has been the formation of a new 'North and Midlands' regional group, which is planning a series of events in Sheffield, Manchester and Leeds.

Grounded theory, A practical guide second edition



Melanie Birks and Jane Mills
SAGE, 2015
Reviewed by Alison Allam

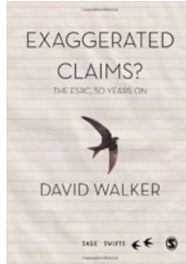
This book provides an accessible guide to using grounded theory with its emphasis on practical guidance about how to use grounded theory methods. This is a key strength as the whole research process is covered, with the opening chapters focusing on how to plan research using grounded theory methods through to the concluding chapters focusing on evaluation of the application of the method, dissemination of the research findings and maximising their impact.

The authors provide clear advice about practical techniques inherent in any approach to grounded theory, for example theoretical sampling, coding and the importance of writing memos. One of the guide's strong points is that it links the content of each chapter to a worked example based on the authors' experience of undertaking grounded theory research.

However, while the book provides useful practical guidance about the issues and potential challenges of opting for grounded theory, if one is looking for a deeper and more advanced understanding of its historical origins and philosophical underpinnings, then it is somewhat limited. Some of the terminology is unclear and contradicts the founding principles of grounded theory, for example the seminal grounded theory texts use the term 'constant comparative methods', whereas this book talks of 'constant comparative analysis'.

As the book's focus is practical guidance, I think it is most suitable for postgraduate students and/or researchers who have not used this approach before.

Exaggerated claims? The ESRC 50 years on



David Walker
SAGE, 2016
Reviewed by Kirby Swales, director of Survey Research Centre, NatCen Social Research

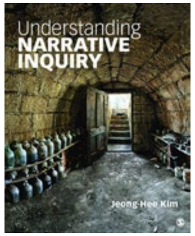
This book is a rather unique beast, both in style and scope. The author, a long time Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) committee member, has taken it upon himself to offer a personal critique of the role and function of the ESRC. The book aims to chart the historical background of the ESRC – why it was created, its main phases and the role of different leaders and stakeholders – and to assess the way it operates.

I found it an interesting and thought-provoking read but it does not set about meeting these objectives in a structured way. It is a mixture of historical anecdotes and repeating core themes, written in a meandering style. It may have been better to create a clearer analytical framework.

Nevertheless, the book does shed important light on the history of the organisation, and the themes it raises are crucial, such as: defining the role of the state in knowledge production; the relationship between policymakers and 'scientists' in deciding what gets funded; the extent to which policy evaluation is 'policy science' (that is, divorced from political and ideological debates); the level of impact; and dissemination of research. The overall tone is fairly critical – it argues that the ESRC has been overly 'captured' by academics and universities; it is not as effective as it should be in ensuring knowledge accumulates; and has become divorced from Whitehall. There is, however, little attempt to present the counter view and few ideas and recommendations for an alternative model. As the ESRC moves into a new world of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the best way to structure social science funding remains an open question – and the answer partly depends on the approach to the fundamental issues raised in this book.

Therefore, despite its stylistic and structural weaknesses, I would definitely recommend this book to those interested in the policy and politics of social science research.

Understanding narrative inquiry: the crafting and analysis of stories as research



Jeong-Hee Kim
SAGE, 2016
Reviewed by Huma Adina, research officer, Research and Experimental Design, Department for Work and Pensions

This is a comprehensive guide to narrative research. It is easily accessible to the uninitiated student, and structured to follow the steps of this type of research endeavour, from writing research questions and conducting interviews to analysis and writing-up. The advice is practical – for instance, the author uses examples to illustrate how research questions can be improved to fit a narrative inquiry. The book is illustrated throughout with examples of research, drawing from a multitude of fields, whilst also offering a fascinating insight into visual and artistic examples. As such, it makes a fascinating read for anyone interested in interdisciplinarity and the wider research world.

This volume is very engaging, as the author clearly uses her insight into narrative and storytelling to inform her presentation. She seems to be talking directly to her readers, achieved by using personal examples and a conversational tone, which risk being appealing to some but off-putting to those who may prefer a more formal approach.

The one disappointing thing about this book is the first chapter. It seems confused about what 'narrative inquiry' is, and seems to merge it into the wider category of qualitative research, illustrated through the author's penchant for differentiating it from 'positivist' or quantitative research. Further chapters are much clearer, but the reader should be able to decide early on whether or not this method is useful for them.

Nevertheless, I highly recommend this book to any new student of narrative inquiry and also others attempting qualitative research. Some of the insights on interviewing/data collection and qualitative analysis are widely applicable.

Books for review

We are always looking for reviewers. Write a short review for us and you get to keep the book. All books up for review are listed online at **http://the-sra.org.uk/sra_resources/publications/book-reviews**. If you are interested, please email **admin@the-sra.org.uk** and we'll send you guidelines.

Here are some of the titles on offer:

Being a scholar in the digital era: transforming scholarly practice for the public good
Jessie Daniels and Polly Thistlethwaite
Policy Press, 2016

Big Ideas in social science
David Edmonds and Nigel Warburton
SAGE, 2015

Classic grounded theory: applications with qualitative and quantitative data
Judith A. Holton and Isabelle Walsh
SAGE, 2016

Demystifying evaluation: practical approaches for researchers and users
David Parsons
Policy Press, 2017

Digital sociologies
Jessie Daniels, Karen Gregory and Tressie McMillan Cottom
Policy Press, 2016

Effective data visualization: the right chart for the right data
Stephanie D. H. Evergreen
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Ethnography for the internet: embedded, embodied and everyday
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Evidence-based policy making in the social sciences: methods that matter
Gerry Stoker and Mark Evans
Policy Press, 2016

Excel statistics: a quick guide
Neil J. Salkind
SAGE, 2015 (third edition)

How to conduct surveys: a step-by-step guide
Arlene Fink
SAGE, 2016 (sixth edition)

Injustice: why social inequality still persists
Daniel Dorling
Policy Press, 2015 (second edition)

Social policy in times of austerity: global economic crisis and the new politics of welfare
Kevin Farnsworth and Zoë Irvin (Eds)
Policy Press, 2015

LONDON

15 & 16 June	Depth interviewing skills (2-day course)	NatCen Social Research
21 & 22 June	Designing and moderating focus groups (2-day course)	NatCen Social Research
3 July	Conducting focus groups	Professor Karen O'Reilly
4 July	Ethnographic methods	Professor Karen O'Reilly
4 July	Introduction to evaluation	Professor David Parsons
5 July	Advanced evaluation: options and choices in impact evaluation	Professor David Parsons
5 & 6 July	Cognitive interviewing: theory and practice (2-day course)	NatCen Social Research
21 September	Cognitive interviewing for testing survey questions	Dr Pamela Campanelli
28 September	Introduction to evaluation	Professor David Parsons
29 September	Advanced evaluation: options and choices in impact evaluation	Professor David Parsons
3 October	Questionnaire design and testing	Dr Pamela Campanelli
5 October	Designing a qualitative study	Liz Spencer
6 October	Introduction to grounded theory	Professor Karen O'Reilly
9 October	Qualitative interviewing	Professor Karen O'Reilly
10 October	Focus groups	Professor Karen O'Reilly
11 October	Qualitative data analysis	Liz Spencer
12 October	Interpreting and writing up your qualitative findings	Liz Spencer
18 October	Research with children and young people	Louca-Mai Brady and Berni Graham
15 November	Advanced workshop: research with children and young people	Louca-Mai Brady and Berni Graham

CARDIFF

20 June	Qualitative interviewing	Professor Karen O'Reilly
22 June	Analysis of qualitative data	Professor Karen O'Reilly

MANCHESTER

2 November	Introduction to evaluation	Professor David Parsons
3 November	Advanced evaluation: options and choices in impact evaluation	Professor David Parsons

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Full details of all SRA courses and booking at: **www.the-sra.org.uk/training**

EDINBURGH

14 September	Introduction to evaluation	Professor David Parsons
15 September	Advanced evaluation: options and choices in impact evaluation	Professor David Parsons
20 September	Introduction to data visualisation and Infographic Design	Lulu Pinney
30 October	Designing a qualitative study	Professor Karen O'Reilly
31 October	Qualitative interviewing	Professor Karen O'Reilly
1 November	Focus groups	Professor Karen O'Reilly
2 November	Analysis of qualitative data	Liz Spencer
3 November	Interpreting and writing up your qualitative findings	Liz Spencer
28 November	Questionnaire design and testing	Dr Pamela Campanelli
29 November	Cognitive interviewing	Dr Pamela Campanelli
30 November	Understanding statistical concepts and basic tests	Dr Pamela Campanelli
1 December	Sampling and introduction to weighting	Dr Pamela Campanelli

SRA RESEARCH MATTERS

EDITORIAL POLICY

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Views expressed by individual contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the SRA.

PUBLICATION DATES 2017

SRA Research Matters will be published in September and December. Copy deadlines: **24 July; and 6 October.**

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