

How to win Facebook and elections: Poland in 2015

By *Helena Chmielewska-Szlajfer*, assistant professor, Kozminski University Department of Management in Networked and Digital Societies; visiting fellow, LSE Department of Media and Communications



The 2015 presidential elections in Poland, anticipated as a continuation of 'same old' centre-conservative politics, were unexpectedly won by Andrzej Duda, a person barely anyone had heard of before January that year. In my recent article (Chmielewska-

Szlajfer, 2018), I examined the ways in which the main candidates presented themselves to the public on Facebook and in major dailies, since Facebook interactions – likes, shares and comments – proved more accurate in predicting the final results than newspaper analyses and polls. Here, I focus on their presence on Facebook, which has over 20 million users in Poland – about 80% of the country's internet users and more than half of its population.

POLLS VERSUS LIKES

The presidential elections were held in May 2015 and were expected to be an easy victory for the incumbent president, Bronisław Komorowski, of the governing party, Civic Platform (PO). He still enjoyed more than 60% support in February, the beginning of the campaign, and even the final polls before the first round of elections gave him a solid win.

Yet, both the first and the second round turned out a success, not for Komorowski but for Andrzej Duda, a previously unknown politician from the main opposition party, the populist right-wing Law and Justice (PiS).

While most of the polls proved to be wrong, an analysis of user activity on Facebook fan pages of the candidates offered a more nuanced picture of political support. In general, people on social media tend to be more emotionally engaged than when answering questions asked by pollsters. And while, for now, direct correlations between people's activity on social media and election outcomes are difficult to pinpoint, studying both polls and social media may suggest links between increased mobilisation online – such as that measured in Facebook likes, comments and shares on the candidates' fan pages – and voting decisions.

In the case of the 2015 Polish presidential elections, firstly, Komorowski, the surprising loser, had the fewest likes – indicators of sympathy – and shares for his posts among the key candidates. Secondly, Duda, the unanticipated winner, had the fewest comments, the most ambiguous indicators of attitudes. However, the most popular presidential candidate on Facebook was Paweł Kukiz, a political outsider and a former



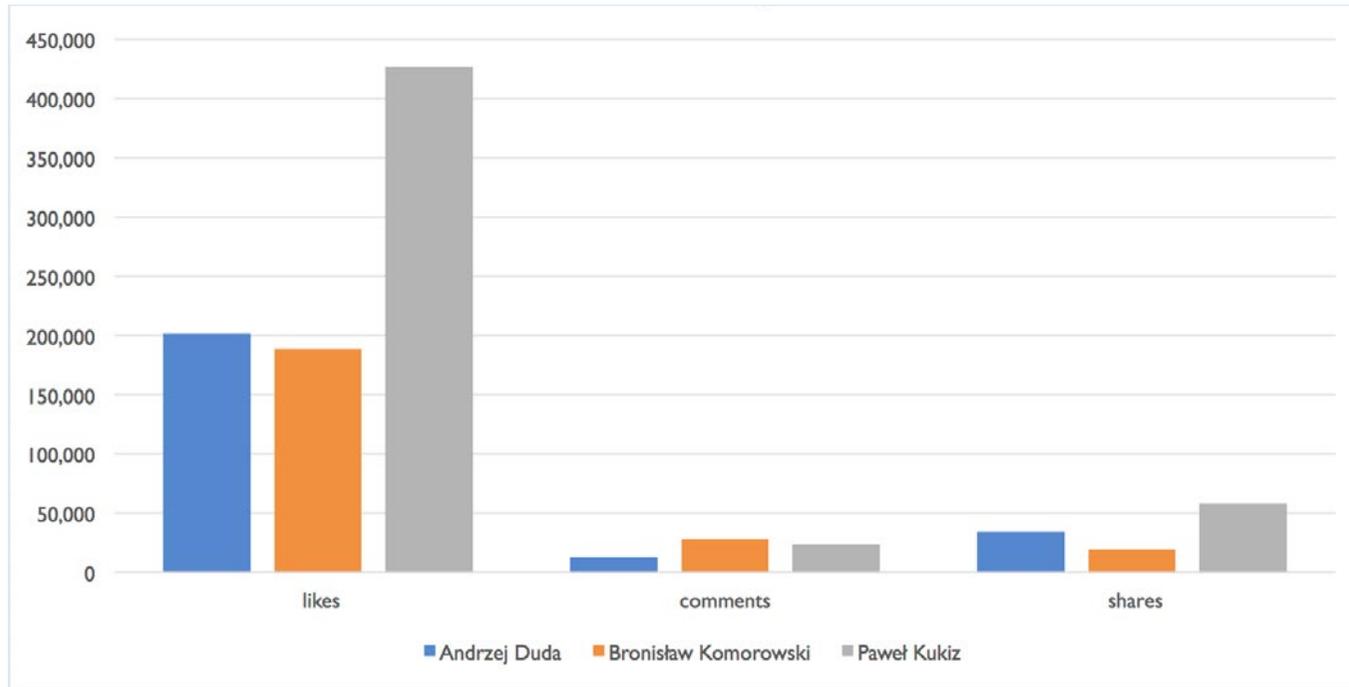
punk-rock star who campaigned against the 'corruption' of the 'political elites'. He came in third place in the first round of the elections with almost 21% of the votes. Two weeks later, in the second round, his supporters voted for Duda who, being a candidate of the opposition party, felt like a more anti-establishment choice than Komorowski.

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Plus news, reviews and briefings

Table 1: Activity on the main candidates' Facebook fan pages 31 March to 11 May 2015



Source: Matuszewski (2016)

HOW TO BE LIKED ON FACEBOOK

Thus, an important question to be asked by a presidential (or potentially any other) candidate is ‘how do you get the most positive reactions on Facebook?’ The short answer: make it authentic, personable, conversational, and remember to post often. While Komorowski kept a formal statesmanlike tone, providing information about his meetings and congratulating Polish artists and athletes on their international achievements, Duda published smiley photos and thankyou to participants at his events held all over Poland. However, he also launched a negative campaign against Komorowski, which included video of the incumbent president’s ‘broken promises’, which turned viral. What’s more, Komorowski’s

‘stately’ approach was prone to ridicule on the platform which generally favours an informal tone. Memes with his gaffes spread fast on Facebook (for example misspelling the word ‘ból’, ‘pain’ in English).

During Poland’s 2015 presidential elections, acting friendly, accessible and direct, in sum ‘authentic’, online appears to have been a better strategy than maintaining a tone of dignity, both for gaining Facebook likes and for winning the vote. It is also worth noting that unlike polls, which provide passive insight into voters’ sympathies, on Facebook people are politically active because they choose to be so. Ignoring this facet of citizen activity that culminated in Duda’s victory caught most analysts by surprise.

For us researchers, this means that we should pay serious attention to the fact that people deciding whether to vote and who to vote for are increasingly inspired not just by traditional media discussions but also by social media content which they react to, comment on and share themselves. If we want to better understand how people make political decisions, it is crucial that we begin taking their online activity into account alongside the polls we have come to rely on perhaps too heavily.

References:

- Chmielewska-Szlajfer, H. (2018). ‘Opinion dailies versus Facebook fan pages: the case of Poland’s surprising 2015 presidential elections’. *Media, Culture & Society*.
- Matuszewski, P. (2016). Polub, udostępni i skomentuj! Analiza kampanii politycznej na Facebooku i jej znaczenie na przykładzie wyborów prezydenckich w Polsce w 2015 r. In: Kułakowska, M., Borowiec, P., and Ścigaj, P. (eds) *Oblicza Kampanii Wyborczych 2015 Roku*. Krakow: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego: 119–138.

We’re looking for a new home – can you help?

The SRA needs to find a new office over the summer. Do you know of anyone who might be able to help? We are looking to rent a space for four desks in central(ish) London. Maybe a colleague or contact of yours might be able to help? Please get in touch with graham.farrant@the-sra.org.uk

SRA chair, David Johnson, introduces the summer issue with a hope for bright days ahead



It was almost inevitable that I would make some mention of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in my editorial this quarter. I suspect that, like me, you have been receiving emails from companies asking you to consent to them staying in touch with you once GDPR comes into force – which it did on 25 May. And similarly, you should have all received a communication from the SRA reminding you about our new privacy notice explaining what personal information we collect, what we do with it and why it's needed. Beyond an increase in email traffic the introduction of GDPR has important implications for social researchers and the SRA is working with the Market Research Society (MRS) and the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to develop guidance for members. Now that the new Data Protection Act is finalised, the aim is to have a clean draft available by the end of June that clarifies the meaning of public interest and sets out an approach to using the research exemption in the Act, plus an FAQ section.

But, there are other things going on in the research world besides GDPR, and this issue covers a wide range of topics from using Facebook to study voting in Poland; diversity in speakers' panels; the gender pay gap; research ethics and technological innovation; the SRA's work to support independent researchers; and our usual branch round-ups and book reviews.

Also in this issue, we hear from our new group of trustees. It's exciting to be able to expand our numbers and recruit experienced, committed researchers to help steer the SRA and support the work of our office, and particularly Graham Farrant, our chief executive, who does so much to keep the SRA moving forward. All our new trustees will be formally 'sworn in' at our AGM in December, which happens on the same day as the annual conference. So, if you've not been before (and even if you have), do come along to meet them. Talking of the conference, though not wanting to wish summer away before it's (hopefully) really begun, I would encourage you all to think about submitting an abstract. This year's theme is *'Adapting to change - where next for social research?'* and the closing date for submission of abstracts is 9 July – see page 8. It's a great way to showcase your work, whether you are at the beginning of your research career or more experienced, and to present it to a friendly audience of like-minded people who are interested to hear about what you've been doing.

The next issue of Research Matters is out in September and so, in the meantime, I hope you all have great summers and perhaps, the chance to relax in the sunshine.

We're hiring!

Digital communications manager (part-time, 3 days a week)

The SRA is looking for a self-motivated, creative and experienced person to develop and lead our expanding digital strategy. The role will encompass marketing and communications, content production, community engagement and digital strategy.

We need an enthusiastic self-starter to expand the SRA's visibility and influence within the social research sector. Experience required in:

- ▶ Social media scheduling software
- ▶ Managing a social media presence across multiple platforms
- ▶ Copy-editing for the web and social media
- ▶ Managing blogs and working with external contributors

LOCATION: central London

Salary in the range £19,200 to £21,000 for three days a week (the full-time equivalent salary is £32,000 to £35,000).

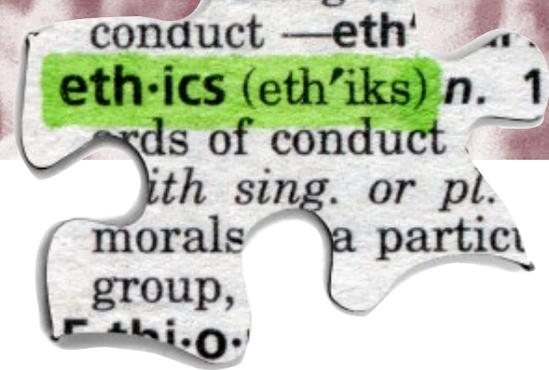
Full details on the Charity Job website:

<https://www.charityjob.co.uk/jobs/social-research-association/digital-communications-manager-part-time-/574141>

CLOSING DATE: 8 July

INTERVIEWS: Wed 1 August





The ethics of conference speakers

By *Helen Kara*, SRA trustee



In March 2018 Stanford University in California held a two-day conference in applied history. There were 30 speakers. **Every single one was male and white.**

Applied history is, like most academic fields, dominated by white men. However, there are also many women and people of colour who work and study within the discipline. To be fair to Stanford, three female historians had been invited to take part in the conference, but each of them declined due to previous commitments. To be fair to historians, I'm sure that more than 10% of them are female. Stanford inadvertently made history itself by ending up with the biggest manel ever. (In case you're unaware, a manel is a panel comprised entirely of men.)

At times the gender balance of speakers at SRA events has been tilted towards men, though generally through circumstance rather than intention or ignorance. Like Stanford, we have experienced women declining invitations; also, those who accept have sometimes dropped out at the last minute. Of course, men do these things too, but despite efforts to achieve equality there are still fewer women in the pool than men, which makes it hard to find women in the first place and harder to find female replacements at short notice. Also, women may drop out for different reasons from men. For example, anyone can get sick, but **recent research from Carers UK** shows that women are still much more likely than men to have to prioritise caring for family members in need.

At times the gender balance of speakers at SRA events has been tilted towards men, though generally through circumstance rather than intention or ignorance

I know gender isn't binary, and that while it is worthwhile to prioritise women because we still face structural discrimination in professional life, this also risks further marginalising trans and non-binary people. Their voices are equally important, as are those of people from different sexual orientations, religions and so on. But this is a short article, so I am focusing on women and people of colour.

I'm pleased that the SRA's summer event will be chaired by a woman and has a panel of four women and one man. (I'm also delighted that the event will focus on ethics in practice in innovative methods. It's on the afternoon of 21 June in London, and if you'd like to join us, I would recommend booking a place ASAP – see page 10.) I haven't met the chair or all the speakers, so I don't know whether it will be an all-white panel.

Because of the number of people of colour in the UK,¹ if you're putting together a panel of five people and they're all white, that in itself is not outside the curve. However, if you put together a second panel of five people, and they are all white too, you need to start asking yourself some serious questions.

As an occasional event organiser, I find it more difficult to ensure that panels include people of colour. There are a number of reasons for this. First, in the UK, there are about four times as many women as there are people of colour. Another is that someone's ethnicity is not always obvious from their name or their voice. There are white Jamaicans, black Scots, and so on. It doesn't feel right to ask a potential

panellist about their ethnicity in the hope of ticking the diversity box. Yet aiming to be 'colour blind' isn't right either, because meritocracy ignores the structural inequalities in our society that keep many people of colour from reaching a career stage where they are offered speaking opportunities.

I don't have a good solution to this problem. However, one thing we can do is to make a point of finding and using the work of women and people of colour in our fields. Then if we find ourselves on, or listening to, a manel or all-white panel, we can cite that work in our presentations or questions. And that should also raise our awareness of more potential speakers for our events.



¹ According to the 2011 census the population of England and Wales is 14% black and minority ethnic – though of course not all are people of colour. The proportions in Scotland and Northern Ireland are lower.

Meet the new SRA trustees

*The SRA can have up to 15 trustees, who serve for at most six years in this voluntary role. Earlier this year the **current trustee group** decided that a refresh was needed, as by the end of 2018 there would have been only eight trustees remaining. So, in February we put out a call to SRA members, and received an excellent response. We are now pleased to introduce you to the 'new intake', who will attend board meetings, as co-optees until their positions can be confirmed by a vote of members at the AGM in December. They describe themselves below:*

AILBHE MCNABOLA

**Head of research and policy,
Power to Change Trust**

I head up an ambitious research programme at the relatively newly established Power to Change Trust, a charitable foundation that supports community business in England. I have 15 years' experience in research and analysis in policy-relevant fields, having started my career in management consultancy at Accenture. I went on to join the team evaluating policy implementation at the National Audit Office, then a stint at PA Consulting before leaving consultancy to head up the research team at the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (now part of Arts Council England) and in my most recent role, at the Design Council where I was director of policy and research.



JANE EVANS

Independent researcher

I am an independent qualitative researcher with over 19 years' experience working with vulnerable and marginalised groups to include their voices and enable their participation. My areas of expertise include: policy relating to disadvantaged children and young people; qualitative research and review methods; participatory methods; research governance and ethics; service evaluation. After completing a PhD in education policy at the UCL Institute of Education in 2007, I worked for nine years at Barnardo's as a senior policy researcher. I have extensive understanding of ethical practice and currently serve as vice chair of a research ethics committee.



KAREN KERR

**Research manager, evaluation and research team,
Skills Development Scotland**

I lead on the management and delivery of all customer research projects for Skills Development Scotland, the national skills agency in Scotland. This includes commissioned research and projects delivered in-house. Core areas include the Careers Information, Advice and Guidance service, employee engagement and external stakeholder perceptions. All work involves a strong equalities element. I have over 25 years' research experience, both as a lecturer and practitioner. I find the variety of interesting work the best thing about my job. I am a passionate advocate for research quality, integrity and innovation.



MARTINA VOJTKOVA

**Head of the evaluation team,
NatCen Social Research**

I oversee NatCen's evaluation work and lead on the design of impact evaluations as well as NatCen's systematic review and evidence mapping work. I'm experienced in mixed methods evaluation approaches, logic model and theory of change work, and process evaluation methods. I also hold the role of associate editor for the Campbell Collaboration. I started my research career as a systematic reviewer and have always been passionate about applied social research and its importance in informing policy and practice. I am particularly excited about the SRA trustee role as it provides a unique opportunity to continue supporting a large number of high-calibre researchers in their professional development.



DAN CLAY

Head of qualitative research, Kantar Public

I lead Kantar's qualitative social research offer in the UK and advise on innovation and best practice internationally across Kantar Public's international offices – what better career than one where you get to help solve complex societal issues? That said, 15 years in and my parents still don't seem to understand what I do! On a personal level, I thrive on leading teams to find creative solutions to conducting and disseminating research, and in working collaboratively with clients from across the public, private and third sectors. I'm delighted to join the SRA board and look forward to bringing energy and a touch of leftfield thinking to help continue expand the membership offer in 2018 and beyond.

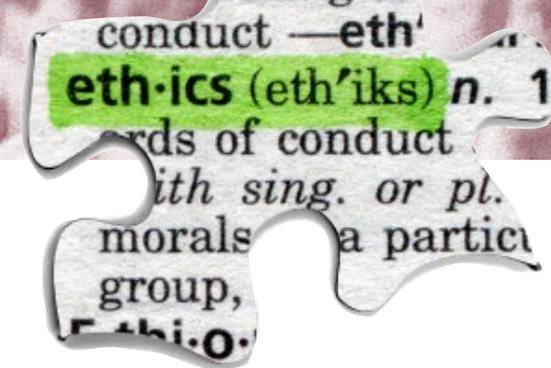


ROSIE MCLEOD

**Deputy head of measurement and evaluation,
New Philanthropy Capital**

I work at a think tank and consultancy for the third sector, helping charities and funders use research and evaluation to increase their impact. I've been in social research since university, starting out in participatory action research projects with Somali refugee women. I then became a social policy researcher focused on qualitative and deliberative methods, but I'm still keen on the ethos and methods of action research. The SRA has been my professional home since the beginning – it reassured me I was in the right place! – and as a trustee I want to help it thrive and really inspire people with some great content.





How can we ethically harness the power of data for social good?

By *Imogen Parker*, head of justice, rights and digital society, Nuffield Foundation



While data ethics has been moving up the policy agenda, it was Cambridge Analytica/Facebook revelations about data harvesting and alleged misuse which made this a public debate.

It was a public education in how much can be inferred from seemingly innocuous information amongst friends – demonstrating how a handful of ‘likes’ can be used to profile and target individuals to try to shift opinion or behaviour. It raised questions about data rights, privacy, consent; preferences become profiling, and micro-targeting becomes manipulation.

Amongst social scientists, ethics has been core to practice for decades. Ethics are embedded in academic education and professional training, and are reinforced through industry codes of conduct. In academia, projects are scrutinised by research ethics councils, and peer review is standard.

Yet current debate highlights some lessons we should consider.

ETHICAL PRACTICE MUST BE RESPONSIVE TO TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

The sheer volume of data, and the growth in processing power means that carefully anonymised information can be de-anonymised; non-sensitive information can be stitched together to produce a deeply-personal profile; and theoretical models about personalities or predictive models can be deployed with huge social impact. Ethical data practice is not static, and needs to develop as technologies evolve and risks emerge.

PUBLIC LEGITIMACY MATTERS: WE NEED TO MAKE THE CASE THAT DATA USE CAN SERVE THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Headlines explaining how online information is harvested, sold and used have eroded public trust, posing a risk for those seeking to access data for public good. We need to explain how data-sharing can generate social benefit, from improving medical diagnoses to travel planning. Researchers must engage with the public conversation, providing an honest account of the opportunities, risks and trade-offs. At a time when the survey research industry knows only too well the problems of declining participation in social research, we must argue the case for how data can help society, and demonstrate how that can be done ethically and responsibly.

DATA PRACTICE IS OPAQUE AND ITS SOCIAL IMPACT IS HARD TO QUANTIFY: WE NEED STRONGER EVIDENCE ABOUT THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON SOCIETY

Much of what is known about data-use comes from investigative journalism or from industry: naturally drawn to good and bad extremes. We need more neutral, independent evidence about the cumulative and distributional effects of technology: how it is shaping society. That might require new methods to mirror the information captured by private companies online or new legislation to allow access to private-sector data sets under specific conditions that build in ethical

data practices (Shah, 2018). It’s difficult but vital that we build the evidence base to understand how data is mediating individuals’ access to information, prices, services and rights.

ESTABLISHING THE ADA LOVELACE INSTITUTE

Ethical research is only one part of creating a positive vision of a data-enabled society: we need also to tackle fundamental questions about privacy, ownership, rights, civil liberties, wellbeing and work.

That’s why the Nuffield Foundation recently announced a partnership with leading institutions including the Alan Turing Institute, the British Academy, the Royal Society and the Royal Statistical Society, to create the Ada Lovelace Institute to consider the ethical and social issues raised by data, algorithms and alternative intelligence (AI).

A core part of its work will be connecting academic disciplines, domains and sectors of society. Steered by a multi-disciplinary council, it will connect and convene diverse actors from the public, private and third sectors to identify and define ethical questions posed by technological innovation. It will undertake deliberative work, exploring public acceptance and trust, to develop and promote frameworks for ethical practice. Underpinning its activities, it will catalyse and undertake research to build the evidence base on how data algorithms and AI affect people and society.

We see the community of social science researchers as vital partners in this endeavour, to harness the power of data for social good.

See www.adalovelaceinstitute.org or [@AdaLovelaceInst](https://twitter.com/AdaLovelaceInst) and [@ImogenParker](https://twitter.com/ImogenParker)

Reference: Shah, H. (2018). ‘Use our personal data for the common good’. *Nature* 556:7.

Social Research at the Copyright Licensing Agency

Colin Hand, insight manager at the Copyright Licensing Agency explains how social research informs its work.



Any time I am designing a survey, conducting interviews or meeting with my research partners, I find myself carefully explaining what the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) is, and why we exist. This may not be surprising, until you consider how pervasive what we do is.

Our purpose is to simplify copyright for publishers, authors and the people that use their work, making content more accessible, while ensuring that copyright owners are paid fairly when their work is reused.

A good example is our work in schools. We provide a blanket Education Licence that allows teachers to make copies and reuse content from print and digital publications, without having to seek permission every time.

That means our licence covers teachers in every state-maintained school in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. We have a portfolio of licences for higher education, businesses, public bodies and the NHS, amongst others.

So, we are out there, and you may even be benefiting from one of our licences, but you might not know it.

Therein lies the rub, and is where our research activities come in.

KEEPING UP WITH DIGITAL

Let's stick with schools as an example. Looking back 25 years, teachers would use printed materials and photocopy content for their lessons. Fast forward and this still happens, but now they are using a much wider range of resources, many digital, that are easier than ever to find, share and reproduce.

In this fast-changing environment, we need to ensure that our licences and services keep up with how teachers want to re-use content, so that we can help them do so legally.

EXPERTISE AND EXECUTION

The CLA research team conducts research, champions rigorous methodology and provides expertise to help the business unlock and act on the insights that we discover. We sit alongside product specialists who come up with innovative ideas for new products and services, as well as improvements to the licences. Our research provides some of the fuel for this creative thinking by exploring how teachers are using content, the challenges they face and their attitudes towards copyright. We explore how the digital environment is changing how teachers work, so we can better understand how our licences need to evolve.

THE DIGITAL PUZZLE

One of our main challenges is digital. Our audience has high penetration of digital behaviours, and the new generation of teachers and pupils are digital natives. This means that much of our research must be digital, right? Partly. Our research highlights the need to think beyond digital-analogue distinctions. It's a puzzle of many pieces. Simply put, the life of a copyright-protected piece of content can start out as a printed work, and can easily become digital, before being printed again.

It can all get complicated, and copyright is not always at the top of the teacher's mind. So, it's important to get into the places where our licences are being used and pick up on the visual clues that tell us things the participant may overlook.

Whilst we create digital communities and web surveys, and embed analytics in our platforms, much of our research is conducted face-to-face, where our participants live and work. This helps us stay responsive to what we learn from each interview, whilst building a rich picture of our licence-users' contexts.

And all the above is similarly applicable to our work in healthcare, higher education, further education and corporate sectors.

STAYING IN TOUCH

Ultimately, whilst we work on behalf of publishers and authors, our research provides the perspective of people using their content. It directly supports our efforts to simplify copyright in a fast-changing digital world, whilst keeping us connected to the world in which copyright operates.

You can find out more about copyright and the role of CLA at www.cla.co.uk



Gender pay gap reporting: what will it achieve?

By *Robert Joyce*, associate director, Institute for Fiscal Studies



The gender wage gap has barely fallen over the last 15 years. The Westminster government and opposition have expressed concern over the size of the gap, and a

desire to reduce it. One recent development is that organisations with 250 or more employees have to provide statistics about their gender wage gap. The first set of these data show the vast majority paying men, on average, more an hour than women.

There are two main questions about the value of these new reporting requirements:

- ▶ First, will they help us understand the determinants of the gender wage gap? If used well, more data tend to be helpful but there are certainly big limitations with this particular set of information. It does not include a whole host of factors that one would want information about if the goal is to explain the causes of the wage gap, such as workers' experience, or their occupation and level of seniority. It doesn't even tell us how many men and women are employed at each organisation.

In addition, within-organisation pay gaps will, by definition, miss one potential cause of the wider gender wage gap: namely differences between men and women in the kinds of organisations that they work for. Every organisation could have a gender pay gap of zero, but there would still be a gender pay gap overall if men are over-represented in higher-paying firms. There is evidence from elsewhere that this latter phenomenon does indeed occur.

- ▶ Second, will the new reporting requirements have direct impacts on pay and working practices? This could happen as a result of them providing stronger incentives for employers to address pay gaps, or by revealing information not otherwise known about how their pay gaps compare to those of other similar organisations, shining a light on an issue that may otherwise have gone under the radar. The greater transparency and awareness of the issue certainly could have these effects, but this is something that should be evaluated – more research is needed!

Call for presentations: SRA annual conference 2018: deadline for submissions: 9 July

Adapting to change: where next for social research?

In the SRA's 40th year, the annual conference (13 December) will explore emerging challenges that the profession must adapt to, and also ask: what are the enduring principles of research that will guide practice, ensure robust standards and maintain public confidence for the next 40 years?

Last year's conference attracted over 220 researchers from national and local government, research agencies and institutes, academia, and the independent and voluntary sectors, representing the full range of research methodologies.

Send us your abstract for a 30-minute workshop presentation to this audience, with a focus on one or more of these themes:

- ▶ Qualitative innovation
- ▶ Survey developments
- ▶ Protecting privacy
- ▶ Impact and influence
- ▶ The researched
- ▶ Adapting to change
- ▶ Policy evaluation
- ▶ Technology and quality

Download the template: <http://the-sra.org.uk/events/>
Conference: Thursday 13 December 2018, Kings Place, London N1

Independent researchers in the SRA

By *Helen Kara*, SRA trustee and independent researcher



The SRA has 115 independent researcher members, approximately 10% of our total. The board has become aware that independent researchers have some specific needs, and that we could be doing more to address them through the SRA. With that in mind we have been looking for ways to engage with our independent members.

To kick things off we held an event in London in November 2017 (a second event was planned in Edinburgh but was cancelled after low bookings). The event, with around 30 attendees, was facilitated by me and Graham Farrant. In a brief introductory session, it was interesting to discover that most people had been working independently for five years or more and were not seeking salaried employment. We moved into small group discussions, where each individual identified up to four key issues for independent researchers, which were then grouped into six emergent themes: finding and winning work; training and CPD; networking and collaboration; value of independents; time and money; and client relationships.

Attendees then browsed through the themes and specific issues, discussing what the SRA could do to help and writing down the key points. Their responses were shared with the whole group for any further input or feedback. This process proved fruitful and we came away with useful information. Many people said they enjoyed the day: in particular, the chance to meet and network with colleagues, and the sense that they were not alone in facing challenges.

We had planned to follow up this event with an online session via Google Hangout. However, as the face-to-face event was so well attended and constructive, we decided this

was not necessary. Instead, we emailed the information from the event to all our independent members, asking them to identify their top three priorities. Seventeen respondents voted, with the top themes being: finding and winning work (14), value of independents (11), and networking and collaboration (10). Several respondents added details about their priorities and these were included with the other data in a report to the SRA board in May.

Eleven recommendations were put to the board. One was turned down: the suggestion that the SRA produces standard templates for proposals and contracts was thought to be too risky for the organisation. Four are in place or in our plans already:

- ▶ The SRA already **facilitates collaboration** through its closed LinkedIn group for independent researchers, and its members' directory on the website which everyone can use. And the new website being planned will increase opportunities
- ▶ We already offer independent researchers opportunities to **maintain professional status** by publicising invitations to join our board and other advisory groups
- ▶ **Webinars by experts** is in the plan for our new digital communications manager
- ▶ Ways we might **make training cheaper** for members who need it, including independent researchers, will be discussed at the next board meeting.

The board approved six recommendations. Two will be dealt with by our staff team:

- ▶ Increasing **research funders' and commissioners' awareness** of our independent researcher members

- ▶ Investigating options for bulk buying **analysis software licences** to offer discounts to members

The other four will need input from our independent researcher members themselves. The board would be happy to see:

- ▶ **Draft guidelines** on how and why to use independent contractors
- ▶ A **discussion paper** on the opportunities and risks of setting up some kind of quality assurance or certified status for social researchers, with definitions and parameters
- ▶ A **draft best practice guide** for independent researchers
- ▶ Also, the board was heartily in favour of the SRA providing more activities for independent researchers, but pointed out that the lack of these might well be related to there being no **independent researcher on the SRA's events group**

We clearly need more independent researchers involved if all these good ideas are to stand any chance of becoming reality. As an independent researcher myself, I have been glad to serve the SRA as a board member for the last five-and-a-half years. As my term ends in December, I'm also glad that another independent researcher is about to join (see page 5).

I am keenly aware that independent researchers need to volunteer in other capacities too. There is a limit to what the board, all volunteers themselves, and our small staff team of three people, two of whom are part-time, can achieve alone. The SRA's independent researchers are a community of practice and will get more out of the organisation if we put more in. If you are able and willing to help in any way please contact [Graham Farrant](#) for a chat.

Summer Event

2018

Thursday 21 June
2.00-5.00pm

Local Government
Association (LGA),
18 Smith Square,
London SW1P 3HZ



Ethics in Practice in Innovative Methods

Innovation in research methods brings new ethical dilemmas. Research ethics committees can struggle to support researchers at the methodological frontiers. This afternoon event includes four expert speakers working with mobile methods, internet-based research, arts-based research and place-based research.

Ethics and walking/ mobile methods

Maggie O'Neill, *University of York*

There is increasing emphasis on methodologies at the boundaries of the arts and social sciences. From her long experience of using walking as an arts based method for biographical and/or participatory research, Maggie will consider the ethics and ethical implications.

Internet-based research

Callum Staff, *Government Social Media Research Group*

User-generated content on the internet, and new types of research that come with it, bring a new set of ethical challenges. Callum will examine how traditional ethical principles cope with this challenge, and provide practical examples of issues encountered and handled.

Arts-based research

Dawn Mannay, *Cardiff University*

Arts-based, visual and creative methods can be effective and ethical research tools. Dawn will explore how participants' experiences and feelings can be translated into graphic art, music and film to reframe and ethically re-represent their accounts in engaging and accessible formats.

No parachutes allowed: ethics and place-based research

Louise Sheridan, *Youth/Community Work, Glasgow*

Much can be learned through place-based research. Louise explores how community voices can and should be incorporated throughout the research process. Place-based research should enable communities to shape research, tell their stories and create their own histories.

Event chair:

Leila Baker, *Institute for Voluntary Action Research*

Join us for a glass of wine after the event

Price: SRA Members £40, non-members £60

To download a booking form, visit
<http://the-sra.org.uk/event-registration/?ee=634>

SRA Scotland

By Sophie Ellison

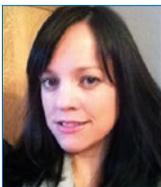
Keep an eye out on the events page for our upcoming seminars on deliberative methods and push to web surveys – we'd love to see you there. I have just started a period of maternity leave and will be formally stepping down as chair later in the year. We are hopeful that we will appoint a new chair to start looking after the branch from the summer (in consultation with me and Lucy Setterfield) in a co-opted role until December. We were also delighted to recently welcome Line Knudsen (ScotCen) to the committee. If you'd like to get in touch with the branch, please contact the SRA office.



SRA Cymru

By Faye Gracey

Keep your eyes out for forthcoming seminars in Wales on the 'Labour transformation programme and Welsh language', and 'Evidence assessment methodologies': these will be advertised shortly. We will continue to share information on our Twitter feed (@sracymru), web page and LinkedIn Group (Social Research Association (SRA) Cymru). We are always keen to hear from Welsh members if you want to get more involved. Faye Gracey: faye.gracey@gov.wales 03000 257459.



SRA Ireland

By Kieran O'Leary

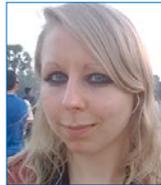
We're always looking for people to get involved in helping the SRA in Ireland. Ideas and input always welcome. Please do get in touch! See the SRA website for further details of events. Email us on SRAIreland@the-sra.org.uk or follow us on Twitter @SRAIreland.



SRA North

By Leanne Dew

SRA North held its first event of the year in Liverpool, with three fantastic presentations exploring advances in secondary analysis; the presentations are available on the SRA website (<http://the-sra.org.uk/events/archive/>) so that you can catch up if you missed it! We are busy planning our events for later in the year – look out for an early career researchers evening, and an event to mark the 40th anniversary of the SRA. Further details will be circulated shortly. As ever, find us on Twitter (@SRANorth) or email us (srnorth@gmail.com) with any ideas, thoughts or feedback.



Systems perspectives in policy development and evaluation: 26 June

Public policies are about changing systems, but conventional approaches to their evaluation have largely ignored this insight. This conference brings together researchers and policymakers from a range of sectors and disciplines to explore the value of systems thinking for understanding policy problems, finding solutions and evaluating them.

- ▶ **What does it mean to have a systems perspective on policy development and evaluation?** Diane Finegood, Simon Fraser University, Canada
- ▶ **The imperative and demands of a complex systems lens on evaluation.** Zenda Ofir, independent evaluator
- ▶ **Theory of change and systems change: what happens when two disciplines collide?** Katie Boswell, New Philanthropy Capital
- ▶ **Wicked problems, wicked solutions: evaluating system change.** Matt Barnard, NatCen Social Research
- ▶ **NHS England's approach to evaluating complex system change: the New Care Models (NCM) programme.** Samantha Hinks, Services, NHS England
- ▶ **A complex systems approach to creating and evaluating the conditions for health in low income communities.** Katrina Wyatt, Wellcome Centre for Cultures and Environments of Health

VENUE: BRITISH LIBRARY, LONDON

Price: £75 for SRA members

This conference is organised by PIRU (Policy Innovation Research Unit) at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, with support from the SRA.

More details and booking: <http://the-sra.org.uk/event-registration/?ee=636>



Thinking ethnographically

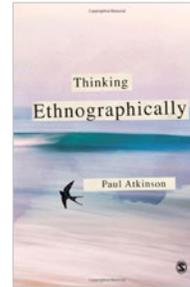
Paul Atkinson

Sage, 2017

*Reviewed by Jessica Douglas, PhD candidate,
Waterford Institute of Technology*

Paul Atkinson is an experienced sociologist and emeritus professor. With his latest book he aims to place the emphasis on 'ideas' as central to ethnography, rather than focusing on practical aspects of fieldwork. He introduces the concept of 'granular ethnography', which is explained as, 'an ethnography that is mindful of the fine-grained organisation of social life'. Under-analysing ethnographic data is a blunder that Atkinson repeatedly warns against, and he provides breadcrumbs that can guide the reader towards a more heuristic application of ethnography.

As this volume focuses more on the ideas and concepts that should inform ethnographic research, it would be most useful to students and researchers who are already conversant with practical ethnographical methods. It is often informal in tone, with several disdainful asides that betray the obvious frustrations of a seasoned academic who has often borne witness to inadequate ethnographic analysis. However, this provides a humorous, if somewhat supercilious undertone to a thoughtful and very well-structured text.



Atkinson expertly signposts his reasoning from the start through to the conclusion. Chapters are well organised, leading the reader through the complexities of the 'granular' approach to ethnography with detailed discussions of concepts such as 'identities' and 'time and memory'.

However, the text can appear somewhat dense at times, and some points are laboured. I think that the addition of bullet points and/or text boxes would make for a more engaging read.

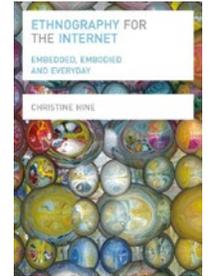
Atkinson acknowledges that his book is not exhaustive, but it does provide sound advice on how ethnography can be used effectively to give insights into social phenomena, and highlights the salient ideas and concepts that inform deep analysis of fieldwork data. It is an excellent guiding text for students and researchers in any discipline concerned with human-centred data. As the author suggests, the book can be used like a ladder 'to get to where you want to, and then kick it away'.

Ethnography for the internet: embedded, embodied and everyday

Christine Hine

Bloomsbury Academic, 2016

*Reviewed by Ivett Ayodele, PGR student (social policy),
Salford University*



This is a challenging yet very useful book for ethnographers who wish to understand how the 'embedded', 'embodied' and 'everyday' internet can serve ethnography in a meaningful way. It provides the reader with the methodological principles and conceptual framework of ethnography **for** the internet, rather than **of** the internet because, as Hine puts it: 'the internet cannot be grasped as a complete entity one could study in its entirety. One cannot do an ethnography of the internet as a meaningful research object in itself, although many potential research objects can be made from it, and are either contained within it or connected to it in some way.'

While great for postgraduate students and academics, it might not be appropriate for undergraduate students, because at times it is difficult to grasp what the author's recommendations mean in practical terms. However, it is user-friendly, clearly signposts what it is going to explore, and each chapter has a clear aim and objective.

The book's main strength is in providing the reader with a guide on how to transfer ethnography from the physical space to a virtual one. I would recommend it to those who have previous knowledge of the subject area and wish to take ethnography to the next level.

Improving survey methods: lessons from recent research

Uwe Engel, Ben Jann, Peter Lynn, Annette Scherpenzeel, Patrick Sturgis (Eds)

Routledge, 2015

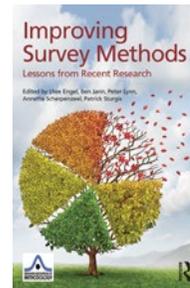
Reviewed by James Lubwama, senior research officer, Department for Education

There is hardly a shortage of books on survey design. But even in such a saturated market the value of this tome (and it is a rather substantial text) is impossible to deny. And with its pan-European collection of authors, all of whom have contributed to the success of some of the largest social surveys in Europe, it is not lacking in authority.

Far more than simply rehashing the principles of survey design familiar to most working in this area, this book (published in 2015) is an admirable attempt to update those principles rather than repeat them. Straddling the quantitative/qualitative divide, the book is well organised, divided into eight sections which cover, among other topics, survey error, web surveys, conducting access panels, coping with nonresponse and missing

data, and asking sensitive questions. I found discussion of the last topic particularly illuminating. Overall, the book has knowledge to impart at all stages of survey design, from inception to writing up analyses.

My one criticism is more of a warning: that this book is not intended for the uninitiated. It is not for the employee who has begrudgingly been enlisted to send out their first Survey Monkey survey, and some of the formulae could easily strike fear into the hearts of those more at home with qualitative research. But don't let that put you off. For academics and seasoned researchers keen to consolidate their understanding of all aspects of survey design, in particular (but not exclusively) those with a quantitative leaning, they are unlikely to find better.



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:

What is qualitative longitudinal data analysis?

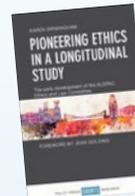
Vernon Gayle and Paul Lambert, Bloomsbury Academic, 2018



A journey through qualitative research: from design to reporting
Stéphanie Gaudet and Dominique Robert, SAGE Publishing, 2018



Pioneering ethics in a longitudinal study: the early development of the ALSPAC ethics and law committee
Karen Birmingham, Policy Press, 2018



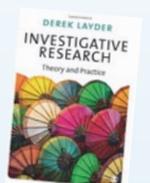
Statistics with R: a beginner's guide
Robert Stinerock, SAGE Publishing, 2018



Practice-based research in children's play
Edited by Wendy Russell, Stuart Lester and Hilary Smith, Policy Press, 2018



Investigative research: theory and practice
Derek Layder, SAGE Publishing, 2018



Understanding research in the digital age
Sarah Quinton and Nina Reynolds, SAGE Publishing, 2018



Doing a literature review: releasing the research imagination
Chris Hart, SAGE Publishing, 2018



CARDIFF

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| 20 November | Qualitative interviewing | Professor Karen O'Reilly |
| 21 November | Conducting focus groups | Professor Karen O'Reilly |
| 22 November | Qualitative data analysis: approaches and techniques | Professor Karen O'Reilly |

EDINBURGH

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|--------------|---|--------------------------|
| 13 September | Foundations of evaluation | Professor David Parsons |
| 14 September | Impact evaluation (advanced): understanding options, choices & practice | Professor David Parsons |
| 8 October | Designing a qualitative study | Professor Karen O'Reilly |
| 9 October | Qualitative interviewing | Professor Karen O'Reilly |
| 10 October | Conducting focus groups | Professor Karen O'Reilly |
| 11 October | Introduction to data visualisation and infographic design | Lulu Pinney |
| 24 October | Qualitative data analysis | Liz Spencer |
| 25 October | Interpreting and writing up your qualitative findings | Liz Spencer |
| 27 November | Questionnaire design and testing | Dr Pamela Campanelli |
| 28 November | Understanding statistical concepts and basic tests | Dr Pamela Campanelli |
| 29 November | Sampling and introduction to weighting | Dr Pamela Campanelli |
| 30 November | Cognitive interviewing for testing survey questions | Dr Pamela Campanelli |

LONDON

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|--------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 21 June | Introduction to data visualisation and infographic design | Lulu Pinney |
| 22 June | Project management in research and evaluation | Professor David Parsons |
| 3 July | Web surveys | Dr Pamela Campanelli |
| 4 July | Impact evaluation (advanced): understanding options, choices & practice | Professor David Parsons |
| 10 July | Qualitative interviewing | Professor Karen O'Reilly |
| 11 July | Conducting focus groups | Professor Karen O'Reilly |
| 25 September | Questionnaire design and testing | Dr Pamela Campanelli |
| 27 & 28 Sept | Designing and moderating focus groups | NatCen Social Research |
| 5 October | Introduction to qualitative research | NatCen Social Research |
| 9 October | Understanding statistical concepts and basic tests | Dr Pamela Campanelli |
| 10 October | Sampling and introduction to weighting | Dr Pamela Campanelli |
| 16 October | Ethnographic methods | Professor Karen O'Reilly |
| 17 October | Qualitative data analysis | Liz Spencer |
| 18 October | Interpreting and writing up your qualitative findings | Liz Spencer |
| 18 & 19 Oct | Depth interviews | NatCen Social Research |
| 30 October | Designing a qualitative study | Professor Karen O'Reilly |
| 31 October | Qualitative interviewing | Professor Karen O'Reilly |
| 1 November | Conducting focus groups | Professor Karen O'Reilly |
| 8 November | Introduction to data visualisation and infographic design | Lulu Pinney |
| 12 & 13 Nov | Analysis of qualitative data | NatCen Social Research |
| 27 November | Introduction to grounded theory | Professor Karen O'Reilly |
| 28 November | Public involvement in social research and evaluation | Dr Louca-Mai Brady and Berni Graham |

SHEFFIELD

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|--------------|---|---------------|
| 13 September | Introduction to data visualisation and infographic design | Lulu Pinney |
| 16 October | Creative research methods for evaluation | Dr Helen Kara |

SRA member discount: make sure to use your promo code.

More information: Lindsay Adams, training co-ordinator: lindsay.adams@the-sra.org.uk

We regularly add courses and course locations to our programme. Please contact Lindsay Adams (lindsay.adams@the-sra.org.uk) or check our website for updates. You can also join our mailing list at www.the-sra.org.uk

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

SRA RESEARCH MATTERS

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

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Copy deadlines: **23 July** (September issue); **5 October** (December issue).

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