

research matters



Social research degree apprenticeship: from idea to implementation

By Jonathan Laszlo, Government Social Research (GSR) degree apprenticeship project manager,
His Majesty's Treasury

Have you ever wished that you could create the perfect social research degree course that covers the full range of skills needed in the workplace? Have you ever been frustrated at limited free-at-the-point-of-access training for passionate people with aptitude for research, but little experience?

In the December 2022 edition of Research Matters, we included an update on how a group of



organisations across the social research sector had initiated the process to create a bespoke undergraduate-level apprenticeship for social researchers. The process began with a 'trailblazer group', which brought together social researchers from central government, the private and third sectors, universities, and professional membership organisations, who shared an aim to remove the cost of a degree as a barrier to attracting the best talent to the profession.

Establishing an apprenticeship standard

In the intervening period since the last article on this apprenticeship, a huge amount has been achieved. The trailblazer group's first challenge was to create an [apprenticeship standard](#). It is this standard that provides the framework for the skills apprentices should gain; the requirements for employers and learning providers in ensuring how apprentices gain those skills; and how these skills will be tested at the end of the four-year programme.

This apprenticeship standard has now passed through a ministerial approval process and provides a crucial funding gateway of £24,000 per apprentice to cover the costs of their training. We are delighted to say [participating employers](#) will now be welcoming their first social research apprentices in September 2024.

What has been achieved since ministerial approval of the apprenticeship standard?

The successful launch of an apprenticeship programme requires more than just achieving the apprenticeship standard. This includes designing and delivering the off-site training elements; creating bespoke apprenticeship roles within employer organisations; and finding a new generation of passionate candidates to fill those posts. Major milestones have included:

- ▶ selecting a high-quality learning partner to design and deliver the degree programme – University of Kent won a competitive tender process run by GSR, acting on behalf of participating government departments. The University of Kent was chosen due to its compelling demonstration of social research expertise and its experience in working with employers to build a system of support which is designed around apprentices
- ▶ creating an exciting, rich and future-focused degree course, based on the standard and tailored to meet the needs of modern social research organisations

- ▶ recruitment backed by a concerted and collaborative marketing campaign to promote the benefits of the programme to school leavers and career-changers. While the apprenticeship standard is common across all participating organisations, each runs its own recruitment campaign – these campaigns have attracted huge numbers of applicants, 2,948 for GSR alone, providing a clear sign that there is a gap in the market for this approach to training in the profession

What will apprentices learn?

The degree course covers the full spectrum of social research methods. In their first year, apprentices will be introduced to the practical and theoretical frameworks of qualitative and quantitative research, thinking through analysis skills, coding skills, fieldwork, statistics, and how to become a social researcher. From there, they will delve into more advanced techniques and the course has scope to incorporate any quickly evolving areas, for example using AI, data science or behavioural science skills for research.

However, what really sets this course apart is that it is applied to the real world. Apprentices will have the chance to immediately put their skills to the test in the workplace and to reinforce their learning through 'doing' – on average spending four days' working and one day a week studying.

What's next for the apprenticeship?

Employers will complete their recruitment activity and the first cohort of apprentices will start in September 2024. There is scope for the programme to increase in scale over time, establishing a sustainable and inclusive pathway to welcome future talent.

New employers interested in taking on apprentices in future cohorts should get in touch with the employer co-ordination group through UK.apprenticeshipECG@verianguard.com.

SRA JOURNAL 'Social Research Practice'

Issue 14, summer 2024, is free to download from the [publications section of the SRA website](#).

The overall aim of the journal is to encourage and promote high standards of social research for public benefit. It promotes openness and discussion of problems. We welcome offers of articles and research notes for future issues. [Read the guidelines for authors and download the article template](#).

If you have an idea for an article or research note but are not sure if it's suitable, please email the editor Richard Bartholomew: rbartholomew@btinternet.com



Thank you

SRA chair, Ed Dunn, expresses his thanks.

Welcome to the summer edition of Research Matters. My introduction almost writes itself this time round on the basis of one simple sentiment – ‘thank you!’



It's been a busy few months for the SRA and a huge thank you goes out to everyone involved in organising and running the annual conference. An enormous amount of effort goes on behind the scenes to ensure the success of the day as well as the generosity of all our speakers who give their time to share their knowledge, work and expertise. This year we've also had to contend with the relatively unusual position of a general election being called a few weeks prior to the conference which prompted some reorganisation of the day as the pre-election guidance affected some of our government speakers. There will always be something to challenge us, but as ever, the collective efforts of our staff team and those volunteering their time on the day rose to meet them head on! One of the key strengths of the SRA is, indeed, our membership body, especially those who volunteer their time for the various initiatives, deliverables and causes that strengthen our community. For that I say a sincere 'thank you.' We are better as a result of your efforts.

This month we are also saying goodbye and thank you to Graham Farrant, our chief executive, who is retiring. Graham has led the SRA since 2012 and has worked in our sector for a lot longer! The SRA has grown and flourished under Graham's leadership. Income has grown and the range of activities expanded; both of which are key to achieving our objectives as a charity. Graham also guided us through the turmoil caused by the pandemic and the operational challenges this presented. I know I speak on behalf of all present and past trustees when I thank Graham for his service, and the modest and collaborative style he has adopted throughout.

Of course, in saying goodbye we also say a big hello to Dr Tina Haux, our new chief executive. The board is excited to have appointed Tina and, through her experience in our sector, I know she is already known to many of you. I, and the board, look forward to working with Tina to continue the SRA's development and to fulfil our purpose.

Anyway, back to Research Matters... Another 'thank you' goes to our authors for their contributions. Kicking things off this time round, Shaun Leamon and Tom Stafford introduce us to the work taking place to reduce bureaucracy in the approach to funding research. I know this is going to be of huge interest to many within our community.

I'm delighted to see the launch of the Social Research Degree Apprenticeship, having been involved in the development and launch, both in government and now in my role agency-side. Jonathan Lazlo's piece provides a welcome overview of the scheme. Making product or service

design decisions based on user feedback is something that seems totally obvious but, as Alice Toms reminds us, it is not always what happens. When I was developing the future strategy for the design of surveys in government, including the 2021 Census, a former colleague would reiterate, 'you are not your user'; and in research design it's a fundamental principle we should all challenge ourselves on. I was also pleased to read the article from Helena Rosiecka, Layla El-Salahi and Lydia Lewis on the thinking around the required behaviour of researchers within the Government Social Research profession. It's an interesting and thought-provoking piece for all of us in the wider sector.

One of my leadership commitments, which you will share, has been to ensure that social research has impact. However, as Fiona McHardy demonstrates it is not a straightforward concept to measure. Finally, Sara Daniels, Alex Anstruther and Moryam Akanji showcase the work taking place at Young Scot and their partnership with Data Lab to look at how data, AI and other technological advances are being used and viewed by young people in Scotland – a very timely and hugely relevant issue.

Finally, returning to volunteers, this edition features a special call out to those of us in Wales. SRA Cymru needs you! As one of our leading regional networks we need more of you to help and you will find details later on. I'm looking forward to staffing the SRA stall myself at the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data conference in early July.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Research Matters.

Graham Farrant – thanks & best wishes

On behalf of the Research Matters editorial team and those behind the scenes that make Research Matters happen, I would like to wish Graham all the very best in his retirement. Thank you, Graham, for everything you have done for the SRA over so many years, and in particular the help and steer that you have given to the Research Matters magazine. You will be missed, but we look forward to collectively hearing from you in the next edition as you share some reflections and highlights of your career. **Andrew Phelps**



Challenging assumption-based decisions: user centred design

By Alice Toms, senior quality specialist, Data Quality Hub, Office for National Statistician

'I think we should do it this way!'

'No, I don't like it like that, it's confusing!'



Working in quality, we often hear phrases like these when new services or products are being developed. As a research community, while we're always looking to make the things that we create better, it is important to take on board the needs of the users of those services, rather than making assumptions based upon our own thoughts and preferences.

The Data Quality Hub (DQHub) at ONS works to develop and share best practice and build capability in managing data quality across the data lifecycle. To drive good quality right from the start, we regularly promote the use of user-centred design, in line with government good practice for service design. However, it can be all too easy to refer to opinions or assumptions when designing a product or service. Making decisions based upon assumptions risks:

- ▶ designing the wrong thing
- ▶ creating products or services that are not used or well understood by the intended users
- ▶ collecting inaccurate, unreliable or poor-quality data
- ▶ increasing the burden on the users of our services

DQHub has recently produced a set of posters and accompanying guidance, which aims to help social researchers [challenge assumption-based design](#). Although the posters are hosted on the Government Analysis Function website, they apply to anyone working in social

research. The principles outlined in these posters should help you identify, challenge and reframe assumption-based statements in your work.

Make decisions based on user research

Decisions should be based on data gathered on users' needs. Without carrying out research with your users, you will not know what problems you're trying to solve, what to build, and if the service you create will work well for them. User needs should be clearly defined in the planning stage of your project and can be iteratively updated throughout the research and development process.

Remember, you are not your user

Your product or service should be reviewed and tested by users to ensure that it meets their needs. Changes should be made based upon these findings. In most cases, you are not your user, and something you may find easy to understand might be very difficult for your users to understand. Only your users will be able to tell you if they can understand and use your service.

Avoid making assumptions about your users

It's important that the products that you design are tested on users to ensure that users understand, use and interpret them as intended. It is also necessary to consider the accessibility of your product and design with this in mind. Products and services should be designed so that they can be understood without the need for guidance or additional instruction, unless necessary.

Make sure your research insights are up to date

User needs change over time. Rather than assuming that research done in the past is still relevant to your users, you should regularly conduct new research to make sure that your products and services are up to date and relevant to the world as it is today. While your product may have been originally created to meet user needs, it should be revisited to ensure it is still useful and meets the needs of users, in case they have changed.

Make time for user testing

Consider the time it takes to test and iterate a product or service. Of course, sometimes even the most carefully planned timeline will need to be adapted. You may find yourself with less time than you need to conduct comprehensive research. If this is the case, you should evaluate the risks and caveat the research findings. Remember that testing and review are iterative. They should be repeated, if possible, throughout the design process.

Conclusion

Whatever your research, you should consider user needs from the start to the end of the design process. Challenge assumption-based statements when you hear them, and make sure your decisions are based upon up-to-date, well-evidenced, user needs.

If you would like to find out more about DQHub's work, or if you have any questions, please do get in touch via the [DQHub website](#).

Experiments in research funding to reduce research bureaucracy

By Shaun Leamon*; and Tom Stafford, professor of cognitive science, University of Sheffield, and senior research fellow, RoRI

*At the time of writing Shaun Leamon was a research manager at the Health Foundation, and visiting senior fellow, Research on Research Institute (RoRI)

A call to reduce research bureaucracy

In January 2020, Boris Johnson, then UK prime minister, announced 'a major review of research bureaucracy and methods, including unnecessary paperwork, arduous funding applications and research selection processes'. The subsequent [Independent Review of Research Bureaucracy](#), led by Professor Adam Tickell, was published in summer 2022. The review identified scope to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy in all parts of the research system, but the area highlighted most often for improvement was the process of applying for research funding. Included in the review were recommendations that funders should experiment with new application processes to reduce the burden on applicants and explore innovative approaches to the assessment processes for funding applications.

In February this year, the UK Government [published its response to the review](#). Encouragingly, the government appears to have listened to the recommendations, with key commitments to streamline and experiment with new application processes, greater harmonisation in funders' application processes and approaches, and the trialling of new assessment processes and methods. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, which holds the brief for science and innovation in the UK, also recently announced the formation of a metascience unit, jointly run with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), to conduct experiments to test and

evaluate the effectiveness of new approaches to funding research, development and innovation.

Experimentation is already underway

Many funders have already begun to experiment with alternative funding models, which the review, and government response, acknowledge. To understand this work better, as part of a visiting fellowship between [the Health Foundation](#) and the [Research on Research Institute \(RoRI\)](#), we have been examining these efforts by funders. If the administrative effort of applying for funding and in-award management and reporting can be reduced, it could free up researcher time to concentrate on direct research activity.

A lot of the previous work has, however, focused on the review aspect of the funding process – leaving unaddressed the issue of the significant burden which falls on applicants, a large proportion of whom are destined to be unsuccessful in their funding application. And while there exists evidence on the potential to reduce research bureaucracy through, for example, the use of streamlined application forms, or the use of two-stage application processes – applicants initially submit an outline proposal, and only those that are deemed of sufficient quality are invited to submit a full proposal – the evidence is far from equivocal. Furthermore, much of the evidence comes from relatively small-scale studies.

Here we see the need for research on research – that is, the systematic study of research systems and practice. Good intentions do not guarantee that a funding innovation will have the desired effects, and it is important that decisions about which funding models to employ are based on robust evidence.



Accelerating funder experimentation

The challenge is that different funders have varying levels of knowledge and experience in using and generating evidence on what works. In response, RoRI, in partnership with the [Innovation Growth Lab \(IGL\)](#), has established a new programme focused on supporting the creation and use of evidence in the research and innovation funding system: [AFIRE – Accelerator For Innovation & Research Funding Experimentation](#).

AFIRE, which launched officially with an event on 13 May, will create a forum for research funders to showcase novel experiments with research funding and to receive advice and customised support for each stage of experiment planning, design, deployment, evaluation and reporting.

We are in the process of finalising a working paper scoping innovations in funding models for reducing research bureaucracy. Identifying potential innovations is only half the battle – rigorous experimentation will help evidence potential improvements, as well as guard against unintended consequences. Opportunities exist for making funding faster, fairer and less burdensome – which will be better for funders, for researchers and for research outcomes. We encourage others to join us in experimenting.

[More about the AFIRE project.](#)

Why does defining how researchers behave matter?

By Helena Rosiecka, GSR member, Office for National Statistics; Layla El-Salahi, GSR member, Home Office; Lydia Lewis, GSR member, Welsh Government



All research organisations should have core guidance to guide researchers' professional behaviour through all stages of their careers, from job applications right through to retirement.

Following defined standards of behaviour can be particularly useful when navigating complex professional situations.

About the GSR Code

The [Government Social Research \(GSR\) Code](#) is an addendum to the [Civil Service Code](#). Its purpose is to help GSR members realise the GSR vision of putting people- and society-centred research at the heart of government decision-making.¹

What is the GSR profession?

With over 2,400 members, GSR is the analytical profession within government for civil servants who generate, provide and advise on social and behavioural research. Around 400 GSR members are also SRA members.

It does this by setting out core standards of behaviour for GSR members and bringing together guidance materials on topics such as ethics, publications and research integrity.

GSR members should particularly refer to the GSR Code at times when they feel unsure about how to proceed with their work.

For example, imagine a research project has been commissioned that has very limited timescales and budget.

The GSR code states that members will deliver the best possible research designs, considering factors such as budget, value added, staff availability and timescales. Focusing on this can assist conversations around project scope.

Continuing with this example, once the research is complete, imagine that the commissioning stakeholders want to publish the findings quickly, so propose that the report is as brief as possible. They are also reluctant to make the data available as they think this will slow down publication. The GSR code states that members will be open about research limitations and how these impact the insights and recommendations of research; and inform public debate by publishing our work and, wherever possible, the underlying data.

This part of the code can help guide discussions on the scope of the planned publication and any underpinning data.

Reviewing organisational behavioural standards

To ensure that standards of behaviour remain fit-for-purpose in our rapidly changing society, guidance documents need to be regularly reviewed.

In particular, it is important that they are well known and accessible for all relevant user groups.

The GSR Code was reviewed last year. That review concluded that, although the core statements remained valid, many members weren't aware of the code and that it needed to be more accessible.

Following the review, accessibility was improved by:

- expanding wording to increase clarity of meaning
- restructuring to align with the Civil Service Code core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality
- publishing in plain text format via the gov.uk website

We are now actively promoting the GSR Code, aiming to ensure that all GSR members are aware of the behavioural standards they should be working to.

Internally, we have promoted the code to our membership by incorporating it into induction events and publishing a blog. We will also advertise it at the forthcoming annual conference, develop accompanying visual products, and produce an online learning tool.

Externally, we have added more references to the GSR Code in the [GSR Profession area of gov.uk](#), and we have written this article!

We hope this inspires you to review and reflect on your organisation's behavioural standards. Does your work and that of your organisation align with its principles? Might a refresh of your organisation's behavioural standards be due?

¹ From [Government Social Research Strategy 2021 to 2025](#).



Data at the heart of Young Scot advisory group

By Sara Daniels, Young Scot data and insights manager; Alex Anstruther, DAG member and student; and Moryam Akanji, DAG member and student

The youth engagement expert, Young Scot, reaches millions of 11- to 26-year-olds providing them with access to quality-assured information and support to help them thrive as they grow up in Scotland.



The rapid growth of AI and other digital technologies is dramatically changing how information is produced. Young people are not only information users – but information producers too.

Youth-related information plays a crucial role in assisting young people to identify and evaluate the reliability of what they read. Supporting them with critical information skills as new technology emerges – such as AI – has never been more important.

We recognise that data is at the heart of understanding the needs of young people and the information they want. We're therefore committed to building evidence and insights while drawing on the wealth of external expertise to guide our decision-making and to improve the impact we make on young people's lives.

In partnership with the Data Lab – Scotland's Innovation Centre for Data and AI – we created a data advisory group (DAG). The group supports us in using our data to improve how we deliver products and services to Scotland's young people. Its purpose is to help us create ideas for data projects; give us technical advice; and connect us to new networks and partners. At least two positions, and we always welcome more, are reserved for young people. This ensures that

we have consistent representation from young people who can report on the impact of issues in their peer group. These members bring a fresh perspective and understanding of how data and tech advances are being seen by young people.

DAG member, 21-year-old Alex Anstruther, joined the group as he believes in supporting public and third sector organisations to put people at the heart of data. An interdisciplinary

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student and part-time data scientist at The London Interdisciplinary School and Winning Scotland, Alex said: 'I applied to the DAG because I think the way the public and third sectors choose to use, or not use, data is hugely important. Especially as data becomes increasingly available and the meaning of consent becomes increasingly nebulous. Ultimately all public services, including youth services, can benefit from the use of data as a tool to overcome biases. That said, they can easily get distracted by data and lose sight of what is really important: people.'

'Groups like the DAG provide more opportunities for humans with a variety of professional hats and lived experiences to shape the way that data is used, so that it is always used to benefit the people who it describes.'

Moryam Akanji, 20, who is studying medicine at Glasgow University, joined DAG to learn more about data management on a wider scale.

She said: 'I think that, as the world develops, data literacy is increasingly important, particularly for young people as they need to be taught how to safely utilise services that run on their own data. I feel so privileged to be part of this group, as someone with a minimal background in data management, and I hope that my own experiences as a young person bring a unique perspective on how to make data management an easier process for young people.'

The group meets four times a year, with each meeting focusing on relevant developments of Young Scot services, and discusses a theme for which the knowledge and experience of the group can add to Young Scot's strategy. For example, in 2023 we discussed AI and emerging technology. We identified that there was limited knowledge of where and how young people interact with AI and to what extent they engage with the technology. This informed the development of a 'tech and AI' section of our annual youth perspectives survey (Young Scot BIG Survey). This recently reported on the feedback from over 2,000 young people across Scotland, showing that 48% of the young people used AI tools or apps. We are thrilled that so many data professionals and young people with an interest in data were keen to volunteer their time to support us.

Our DAG members have a breadth of experience, diversity of thought, background, industry and geography. We are incredibly thankful for their support in helping to ensure that data is at the heart of Young Scot's strategy.

Messages for quantitative researchers

We spoke to some of our qualitative researcher members and asked them ‘what are the key messages you want to get across to quantitative researchers?’ Below are some of the responses we received.

Although we can all read, speak and write English, it takes training and experience to develop a good question using qualitative methods. Question design may appear simple and straightforward as we ask questions every day in life. However it often isn't the case. It's a bit like watching a fashion show – you don't see the work, skills and effort that goes into one behind the scenes, only the final reveal at the end. Leave question design to the qualitative experts – provide your analytical requirements only, let them work their magic and trust that what they give back to you is suitable.

Qualitative research focuses on depth rather than breadth through exploring individual experiences and perspectives and, therefore, providing rich insights that quantitative methods may miss.

Consider methods that can empower research participants and support wider social transformation and value. Qualitative research, delivered using participatory approaches, can bring this dimension to social research, and is worth the investment.

‘Quant is the “what”, qual is the “why”.’ Qualitative and quantitative methods can complement each other to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research question. They are not mutually exclusive. Numbers alone don't always provide the full picture. Sometimes you need qualitative insights to explain the data that you are seeing or to explain a change in the data.

A qualitative or purposive sample is as important as a quantitative sample, if not more so in certain ways. You are dealing with such a small number of respondents, but each one can represent a thousand. I often hear, ‘You just need to grab a few people off the street’. That completely belittles the thought and effort that goes into sampling and recruiting the correct people to target through purposive sampling.

We may struggle do good social research without qualitative methods. Good quantitative research starts with qualitative questions, and qualitative questions are needed to guide quantitative analysis and interpretation.

Don't feel compelled to commission or deliver a survey in situations when generating useful descriptive statistics isn't actually possible. Talk to your research team or suppliers: a modest budget can go a long way to answering evaluation and research questions using well-chosen qualitative case studies and creative approaches instead.

‘Don't quant your qual’. Qualitative research cannot be used to infer statistical conclusions as qualitative data collection methods are not designed with the aim of extrapolating results to larger populations. The value of qualitative research is apparent in its context specificity, its ability to answer questions about how and why phenomena occur, and the combined results of case-to-case examples rather than sample to population estimation.

Qualitative methods allow for flexibility in their design through enabling researchers to adapt to emerging insights and explore unexpected avenues during the research process.

Get involved with SRA Cymru

The SRA's Welsh branch, SRA Cymru, is seeking volunteers for various roles to support and enhance social research activities in the region.

As a charity, the SRA aims to support the development and application of social research while advancing knowledge and professional practice in the field.

With branches across the UK, including one in Wales, the SRA operates through training, publications, conferences and other avenues.

Now, the SRA is looking to strengthen its presence in Wales and needs help to achieve this goal. We're hoping that if you are based in Wales you might consider joining Tîm (Team) Cymru and contributing to the advancement of social research in Wales.

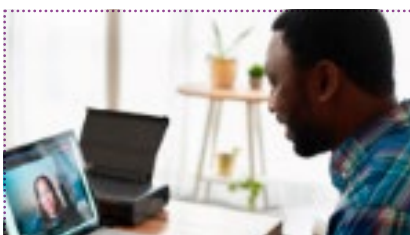
CLICK HERE
FOR MORE
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More about the roles available



Networking enabler

Facilitate informal gatherings for social researchers to share their work and experiences.



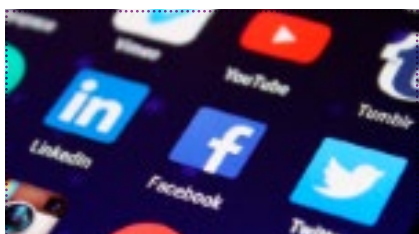
Webinar co-ordinator

Organise webinars to promote learning and discussion among social researchers in Wales.



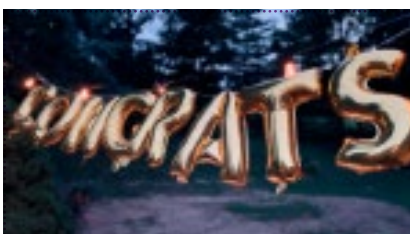
Getting into print enabler

Assist researchers in Wales to publish their work in SRA publications.



Social media manager

Manage SRA Cymru's social media presence to share relevant content and engage with the community.



Social Research Awards Cymru Team

Help organise the biennial social research awards event to recognise achievements in social research in Wales.

You can read more about the [roles and opportunities on the SRA website](#).

If you're interested in getting involved, we'd love to hear from you.

Email us on: Cymru@the-sra.org.uk

LinkedIn: [Social Research Association \(SRA\) Cymru](#)

Impact in the eye of the beholder?

By Fiona McHardy, research and information manager, Poverty Alliance

Working as a research manager within an anti-poverty organisation, the question of 'impact' is one that is never far from my thoughts. In the world of social research, impact is critical to how we measure, evaluate and understand our work.



In practice, determining impact is complex. 'Evidence-based policymaking' and 'evidence into practice' are common expressions but they refer to vague, and often contested, ideas shaped by external drivers such as the political and economic context of which researchers have very little control.

From my own perspective, understanding and measuring impact is a tricky business. Our research and campaigning objectives focus on areas such as income adequacy and our studies span a range of topics and methodological approaches.

Focusing on impact usually results in defining and measuring impact within the fluid worlds of practice and policymaking. This is subjective and complex: how does or can a research team attribute, demonstrate and understand the role that a particular study or evidence has played in a particular field?

It's also important to reflect and consider 'who' we define as important when it comes to impact. By focusing on traditional impact audiences such as government, big business or local authorities, we are also taking a

position about our expectation of where power is held, or the contexts in which change happens.

Operationally, when measuring impact, narratives about impact and resource allocations within projects often result in a focus on the stakeholders who are deemed critical, such as policymakers and funders. Measuring impact requires a process of collaboration and redefining traditional expectations. We have been working within the Poverty Alliance to define the concept of impact and to involve research participants in

From my own perspective, understanding and measuring impact is a tricky business

our thinking about research impact and impact activities. In multiple projects, we have worked co-productively to design and think about the ownership of the recommendations and conclusions. In doing so, there is a more open conversation about the parameters and power relations of defining impact.

While there may be similarities in intended audiences, and while traditional stakeholders may continue to hold the levers of change, there is an opportunity to consider other outcomes through co-production. In doing so, there is scope to bring about other ways of thinking about opportunities for impact and change from research.

There will always be areas of consensus and conflict when it comes to measuring and defining impact. Social research is political, from the very nature of competitive tendering processes to interpreting the data and the subject matter itself. Alongside this, there are the motivations or interests of stakeholders who make use of the evidence. If the reader or user of the work has their own positionality, what does that then mean for impact?

Our tale of impact within our work at the Poverty Alliance has been varied. We have examples which would be considered by many in the research community as indicators or barometers of successful impact. This includes an MP citing our findings at Prime Minister's Questions and multiple forms of mainstream media covering a study with critical early insights on the experiences of rising living costs for low-income households.

As examples, these may be seen as impactful due to increased awareness and reach among people with the power to make change and also because there may have been intangible impacts in influencing policy or practice. These forms of impact will always be difficult to measure. However, researchers could open up new ideas about impact by supporting the greater role and recognition of those who participate in social research in the impact process. Without this can we really claim to having impact? Being reflective at all stages of the research process including of impact reveals much about the social, political and systemic inequalities that shape our world.

Qualitative research for quantitative researchers

Helen Kara

SAGE PUBLICATIONS LTD, 2022

Reviewed by Cheryl Lloyd, evaluation lead for the Maths Excellence Fund at Purposeful Ventures



This book provides a helpful overview of the underlying principles of qualitative research, covering theories and common approaches, from design through to analysis, reporting and dissemination, framed for a quantitative research audience.

It does this by emphasising the ways in which quantitative researchers tend to use qualitative methods already, helpfully drawing out where there are commonalities and different definitions or prevailing views in quantitative and qualitative research.

It is a useful re-entry point if you want a refresher on the up-to-date thinking on

qualitative approaches and have a more quantitative background. Each section includes some reflective questions, encouraging the reader to think about the key concepts and your own views and potential biases, which I found especially useful.

It doesn't set out to be a 'how to' guide or provide detailed guidance about carrying out qualitative research. While it provides some further reading suggestions, I would not recommend it for readers looking for support in carrying out specific approaches or analysis. A specialist book would be better, although it might help as a starting point.

While the sections on presenting and dissemination will be quite familiar to those already involved in these for quantitative research, chapters on theory, design and analysis are likely to be newer to an experienced quantitative researcher. In particular, the questions and guidance on quality criteria for designing research and examples would be useful for people newly managing qualitative and multi-modal/mixed methods research, commissioning research or making funding decisions.

Titles for review



We are always looking for reviewers (SRA members only) to write a short review for us. All books up for review are listed below. If you are interested, please email admin@the-sra.org.uk and we'll send you guidelines. Please note that publications are available as eBooks only. Book reviews need to be submitted within 10 weeks of you receiving the book. Here are a few of the titles on offer:

The craft of qualitative longitudinal research

Bren Neale

SAGE Publications Ltd, 2021

Doing qualitative research online – second edition

Janet E Salmons

SAGE Publications Ltd, 2022

Doing visual ethnography – fourth edition

Sarah Pink

SAGE Publications Ltd, 2021

Ethics, integrity, and policymaking: the value of the case study, Research Ethics Forum Series: Volume 9

(ed. with Dónal O'Mathúna, Ron Iphofen)

Springer, 2022

Ethical evidence and policymaking: interdisciplinary and international research

(ed. with Dónal O'Mathúna and Ron Iphofen)

Policy Press, 2022

SRA training

Unless otherwise stated, all courses are run online using Zoom. In-person courses are held in London or Edinburgh. Online courses run over one day or two half days, and extended courses over two full days or three part-days.

New dates and courses are being added all the time (and only courses with space are shown below), so for latest info please visit www.the-sra.org.uk/training or contact Patricia: training@the-sra.org.uk

COSTS: online: SRA members: half day: £82.50; one day or two part-days: £165; two days or three part-days: £330. Non-members: half day: £110; one day or two part-days: £220; two days or three part-days: £440; **in person:** SRA members: £202.50; non-members: £270.

If you have any queries, please contact Patricia: training@the-sra.org.uk

Full details of all courses are at www.the-sra.org.uk/training

Evaluation

4 July: Foundations of evaluation, with Sally Cupitt

5 September: Impact evaluation (advanced), with Professor David Parsons

11 September: Theory-based evaluation – options and choices, with Professor David Parsons

12-13 September: Building and using a theory of change, with Professor David Parsons

Qualitative

3 July: Narratives and storytelling in qualitative research, with Dr Karen Lumsden

4 July: Narrative analysis, with Dr Karen Lumsden

11 July: Introduction to focus groups, with Dr Karen Lumsden

29 August: Introduction to qualitative interviewing, with Dr Karen Lumsden

19-20 September: Creative methods in qualitative data collection, with Dr Nicole Brown

20 September: AI-assisted qualitative data analysis, with Christina Silver

9 October (in-person, in London):

Interviewing (qualitative data collection), with Professor Karen O'Reilly

10 October (in-person, in London):

Qualitative data analysis, with Professor Karen O'Reilly

11 October (in-person, in London):

Interpreting and writing your qualitative findings, with Professor Karen O'Reilly

6 November (in-person, in London): Conducting focus groups, with Professor Karen O'Reilly

7 November (in-person, in London):

Qualitative data analysis, with Professor Karen O'Reilly

8 November (in-person, in London):

Interpreting and writing your qualitative findings, with Professor Karen O'Reilly

Quantitative

9 July: Imputation for item missing data, with Dr Pamela Campanelli

10-11 July (2 afternoons): The 3 stages of weighting probability surveys, with Dr Pamela Campanelli

12 July: Introduction to sampling for social surveys, with Alexandru Cernat

4 September: Understanding statistical concepts and essential tests, with Valerija Kolbas

25-26 September (2 afternoons): Questionnaire design, with Dr Pamela Campanelli

16-17 October (2 afternoons):

Web survey design, with Dr Pamela Campanelli

22-24 October (3 afternoons):

Cognitive errors in questionnaires and possible solutions, with Dr Pamela Campanelli

Other research skills

1 July: Writing effective research reports, with Dr Simon Haslam

9 July: Data visualisation and infographic design, with Nigel Hawtin

10 July: Introduction to participatory action research, with Dr Karen Lumsden

2 December: Introduction to mixed methods research, with Dr Sarah Jasim and Dr Ruth Plackett

Spotlight on SRA activity

Training

www.the-sra.org.uk/training

Many qual, quant and evaluation courses are online.

Events

www.the-sra.org.uk/events

Blog

www.the-sra.org.uk/blog

Topical posts on researching.

Journal

www.the-sra.org.uk/journal

Read back issues and find out how to write an article for our free journal.

Resources

www.the-sra.org.uk/resources

Good practice guides and more.

Ethics

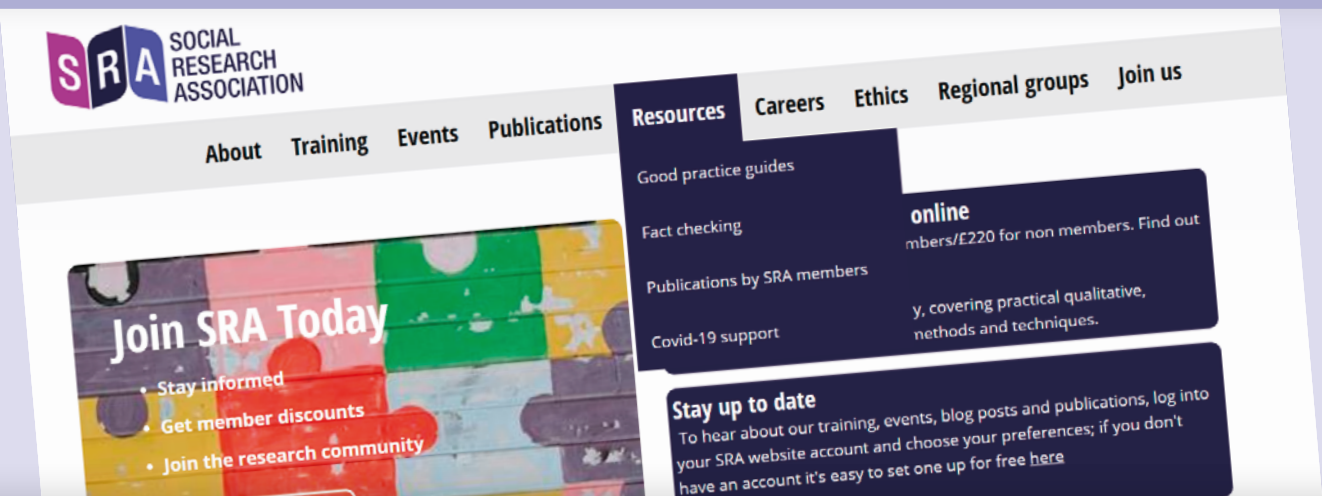
www.the-sra.org.uk/ethics

An expert forum for members' queries, good practice guides and more.

Member resources

Log in, go to www.the-sra.org.uk then see 'members' section.

Free access to 5,500+ social science journals, data science training at a third off, and more.



research matters

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

Publication dates 2024

We publish four times a year. Next issues: September and December.
Copy deadlines: **12 July** (September); **18 October** (December).

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The Social Research Association (SRA)

Email: admin@the-sra.org.uk

www.the-sra.org.uk