

# DESIGNING RESEARCH in EDUCATION

Concepts and Methodologies

Edited by  
**JON SWAIN**

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website 



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55 City Road  
London EC1Y 1SP

SAGE Publications Inc.  
2455 Teller Road  
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd  
B 1/1 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area  
Mathura Road  
New Delhi 110 044

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd  
3 Church Street  
#10-04 Samsung Hub  
Singapore 049483

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Editor: Jai Seaman  
Assistant editor: Alysha Owen  
Production editor: Ian Antcliff  
Marketing manager: Ben Griffin-Sherwood  
Cover design: Shaun Mercier  
Typeset by: C&M Digital (P) Ltd, Chennai, India  
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd,  
Croydon, CR0 4YY

Editorial Arrangement © Jon Swain 2017  
Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5 and 11 © Jon Swain 2017  
Chapter 4 © Will Gibson 2017  
Chapter 6 © Jane Hurry 2017  
Chapter 7 © Charlie Owen 2017  
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Chapter 10 © Olga Cara 2017

First published 2017

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**Library of Congress Control Number: 2016938801**

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from  
the British Library

ISBN 978-1-4462-9425-3  
ISBN 978-1-4462-9426-0 (pbk)

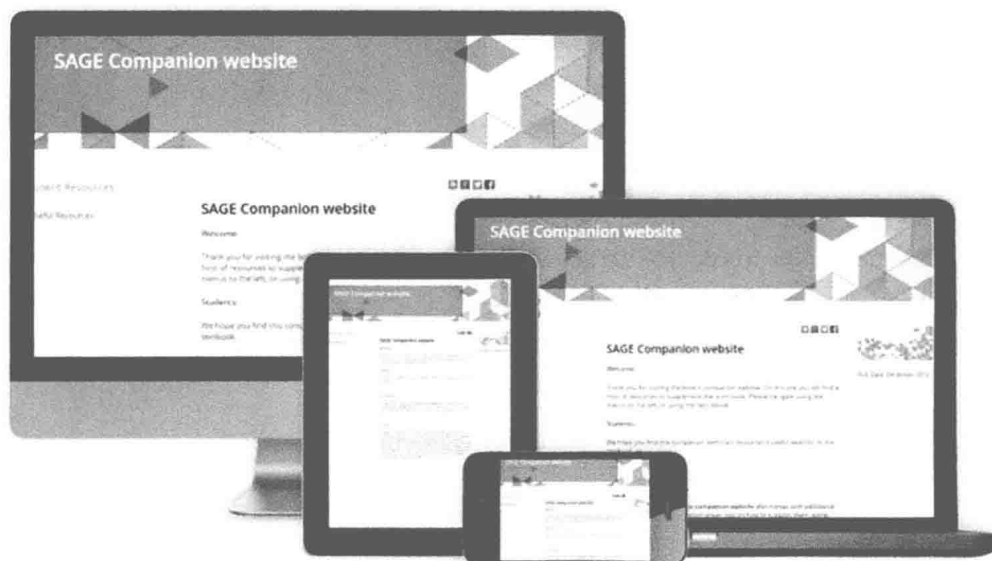
# DESIGNING RESEARCH in EDUCATION

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## STUDENT RESOURCES

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## INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES

**PowerPoint slides** cover the key themes and topics of each chapter.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ABE:</b>	Adult Basic Education
<b>AERA:</b>	American Educational Research Association
<b>BERA:</b>	British Educational Research Association
<b>BPA:</b>	British Psychological Association
<b>BSA:</b>	British Sociological Association
<b>CDR:</b>	Conceptualising and Designing Research. This is a core research training course at University College London, Institute of Education (UCL/IOE), which this book is based on
<b>CERES:</b>	Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland
<b>CRB:</b>	Criminal Record Bureau, UK. In 2012, the CRB was replaced by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). These organisations search(ed) to see if a researcher has a criminal record
<b>DBS:</b>	Disclosure and Barring Service. See CRB
<b>DHEW:</b>	Department of Health Education and Welfare, UK
<b>EdD:</b>	Or Doctor in Education. This degree is a professional doctorate that is more structured than a PhD and generally involves some course work and a thesis (usually about 40,000 words). It is aimed at professionals, who frequently carry out their research inside and about the institution in which they work
<b>ESRC:</b>	The Economic and Social Research Council is one of the seven Research Councils in the UK. It provides funding and support for research and training work in social and economic issues, such as postgraduate degrees
<b>FE:</b>	Further Education
<b>HE:</b>	Higher Education
<b>IFS:</b>	Institute Focused Study, which is part of some EdD courses, and is a relatively small empirical assignment, usually conducted within the student's own place of work
<b>MRes:</b>	A master's degree in Research, which in most cases is designed to prepare students for doctoral research, and as with many master's degrees involves a dissertation
<b>NCRM:</b>	National Centre for Research Methods, Southampton, UK
<b>NHMRC:</b>	National Health and Medical Research Council, Australia
<b>NOMS:</b>	National Offender Management Service, UK
<b>OFSTED:</b>	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. It inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. It is a non-ministerial department

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- PhD:** Or Doctor of Philosophy. This degree varies considerably according to the country, institution and time period. Usually, a candidate must submit a thesis, normally of about 80,000 words, often consisting of a body of original academic research, which is worthy of publication. In many countries, a candidate must defend this work before a panel of expert examiners appointed by the university
- QAA:** The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is an independent body that monitors, and advises on, standards and quality in UK higher education
- RCT:** Randomised controlled trial



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Mano Candappa** is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology of Education at University College London, Institute of Education (UCL/IOE), and has more than 20 years of experience in social research, undertaking both primary and secondary analysis. Her research specialisation is in migration, forced migration and issues around social marginalisation, human rights and inclusion, with a particular interest in childhoods and the politics of belonging, which she has researched widely in UK and EU contexts. She is Programme Leader for the Sociology of Education MA and undertakes teaching on a range of courses around the above issues, including bachelor's and master's courses, and was an integral member of the CDR<sup>1</sup> team. She is the sole and co-author of a number of books and academic papers, including *Education, Asylum and the 'Non-Citizen' Child: The Politics of Compassion and Belonging* (2010), with Halleli Pinson and Madeleine Arnot, which won a Society for Educational Studies Prize in 2011.

**Olga Cara** is a Senior Research Officer at UCL/IOE and has been working in the field of lifelong learning and basic skills since 2005 as both a quantitative and qualitative researcher. She also teaches a variety of methodology courses and supervises undergraduate, master's, PhD and EdD students. Olga gained her PhD in 2013 and has published a number of academic articles. She has been trained as a quantitative sociologist, but has built her expertise in mixed methods research through her master's in Research (MRes) in social anthropology and subsequent mixed methods research projects. Her broad main research interest is in education as a tool for social and economic integration. Olga has expertise in adult basic skills, family learning, intergenerational skills transfer as well as migration and ethnicity in educational contexts. She also specialises in mixed methods research that combines complex statistical designs, such as randomised controlled trials (RCTs), longitudinal data and/or multilevel modelling with qualitative data.

**Will Gibson** is a Reader in Social Research at UCL/IOE with a particular interest in 'interactionist' traditions, including Symbolic Interactionism, Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis. Much of his teaching and research writing focuses on methodological issues in qualitative methodologies. Will's research involves exploring communicative action and the uses of technology in diverse settings, from healthcare contexts to online discussion forums. He is currently writing a book with Dirk vom Lehn, exploring the contributions that interactionist approaches have made to the study of social institutions.

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1 CDR stands for Conceptualising and Designing Research. This is a core research training course that I led at my own university, and the contributing authors of this book taught on. There is more information about the CDR course in Chapter 1.

**Jane Hurry** is Professor of the Psychology of Education at UCL/IOE and is currently Head of the Department of Psychology and Human Development. She has two core areas of research interest: on the cognitive side, literacy development, both typical and atypical; and on the mental health side, adolescent development, particularly focusing on internalising disorders/self-harm and externalising disorders/offending. Jane and her doctoral students have used experimental designs in both these areas. She teaches on a number of master's courses and was a regular contributor to CDR. She has published many academic articles and books.

**Rebecca O'Connell** is a Senior Research Officer at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL/IOE. Her background is in social anthropology and her principal research interests lie at the intersection of care and work, especially foodwork and childcare, with a particular focus on the home, food practices and the ethics of care. She has taught about ethnography on a number of doctoral courses, including CDR, and led a number of multi-method research projects including, currently, a European Research Council-funded study of Families and Food in Hard Times in three European countries. For more information about the project, see WEBLINK 1. Rebecca's publications include numerous articles in international journals and a book co-authored with Julia Brannen, *Food, Families and Work* (2016).

**Charlie Owen** is a Senior Research Officer at the Thomas Coram Research Unit at UCL/IOE. He also teaches social research methods to doctoral students. He specialises in quantitative methods and has particular expertise in secondary analysis of large datasets and official statistics. His current research interests include early years childcare, including gender in childcare; looked after children; mixed race issues and issues around disability and special education needs. He was an integral member of the CDR course for a number of years, and has published a range of academic books and articles.

**Jon Swain** currently works at UCL/IOE, where he is Senior Researcher and Lecturer. He carries out mainly qualitative research, which has included a series of numeracy and literacy projects in the post-16 sector. He has also written many articles on boys' masculinities. Between 2008 and 2013, he was programme leader for the MPhil/PhD research training programme and was course leader of CDR. He also has extensive experience in teaching on the EdD programme and he continues to supervise and tutor both PhD and EdD students. His professional career began as a primary school teacher and he took a part-time MA at the Institute of Education in the late 1990s before completing his PhD in 2001.

  
**WEBLINK 1**  
Families &  
food in hard  
times

# INTRODUCTION

Jon Swain

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## BOX 0.1

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### Overview of chapter

This preliminary chapter includes:

- An introduction on what the book is about and who the main intended audience is.
  - A section on how the book is organised and structured, including its pedagogical features.
  - A brief summary of each chapter.
  - A note on how readers can use the book.
- 

## INTRODUCTION

This book is set in the field of education and is primarily about **conceptualising** and designing doctoral research, including how to devise an appropriate **methodology**. It is principally aimed at doctoral students already involved in their research projects (for both PhD and EdD degrees) but it will also be of interest to students considering taking a doctorate, as well as academic tutors, supervisors, lecturers and researchers. This introductory chapter begins by stating what the book is about and who its main intended audience is, and this is followed by a section on how the book is organised and structured, including its pedagogical features. The final section contains a brief summary of each of the 11 chapters and suggests different ways that the book may be used by its readers.

### (i) Whom the book is for

The book is about conceptualising and designing **empirical research** in education, and also about constructing a sound methodology. By ‘conceptualising’, I refer to the process in which underlying concepts are developed and clarified; and by ‘empirical’, I mean research that is based on direct or indirect experience of observable information, or interaction with, the world (Punch and Oancea, 2014). Although the term ‘methodology’ is contested in the academic community, I am regarding it as a framework that offers principles of reasoning, which are informed by particular theoretical positions. I also agree with writers such as Crotty (1998), who see methodology as a strategy, or the plan of action, linking the chosen **methods** to particular conceptual assumptions, and showing how a research design is able to offer answers to the particular research questions.

The book does not consider theoretical or philosophical research, or historical research. Neither is the book about how to do research; rather, it is about *how doctoral students conceptualise and design their particular research projects, including devising an appropriate methodology, in order to answer their particular questions and/or to develop and test their ideas*. It also sets out to open up the possibilities of students using different designs for their own ideas. Constructing a research design is not always easy but as the main editor of the book it is my contention that a sound design, and the coherence of the associated **conceptual framework**, will go a long way in determining the satisfaction of a student's examiners.

### (ii) The structure and organisation of the book

The book is divided into two parts: Part I, with Chapters 1–5, looks at concepts and philosophical issues that inform research design; and Part II, with Chapters 6–10, looks at the application of these concepts in different research designs. In other words, ideas and concepts that are introduced in the first half of the book are developed and illustrated in the later specific chapters.

### Pedagogical features

The book contains a number of features that are designed for readers to consolidate their learning. For each chapter (excluding this preliminary introduction), these include:

- An Overview at the beginning.
- A Summary of the Key Points at the end.
- An end-of-chapter section called Areas for Discussion with some of the issues raised in the chapter to generate discussion/activity.
- Also at the end of each chapter, is an Annotated Bibliography with a list of additional readings, which authors have found particularly influential. In addition, there is a box of Further Reading that authors include either to provide readers with a greater variety of sources or, in some cases, texts that are a little more challenging, and are aimed at readers who want to engage with texts that are more abstruse.
- An annotated Glossary of terms and concepts is provided at the end of the book, together with a full list of References.
- A number of digital links, taking the reader to a companion website, are provided in the majority of the chapters. Some of these provide further, more detailed information, while some links are to other research studies.

Chapters 6–10 contain headings on the definitions of each design, their **epistemological assumptions** (concerning the **theory** and nature of knowledge, and how we understand the world), their key features, including the main methods and methodologies they generally use, their advantages and disadvantages and associated ethical issues. The chapters also contain examples of research carried out by each author as well as digital links (mentioned above) to other research studies using each design.

## The organisation of the book

Excluding this preliminary chapter, the book is presented in 11 chapters, which, in turn, are organised under the two umbrella headings mentioned above: Part I: Concepts and philosophical issues informing research designs (Chapters 1–5); and Part II: The application of the research designs (Chapters 6–10). Chapter 11 is a summary and discussion of the main themes explored and outlined in the preceding chapters.

The book ends with a glossary of terms used throughout the chapters (indicated in the text by bold type at first mention), references and the index.

### Chapter summaries

- Part I: Concepts and philosophical issues informing research designs

- Chapter 1 *Jon Swain*: Setting the scene in educational research

This opening chapter includes a statement of the book's main objectives; a discussion of some of the decisions affecting a research design, including practical and emotional considerations; and an introduction to the author's PhD research, and some of the issues involved in its design.

- Chapter 2 *Jon Swain*: Designing and managing your research in education in the early stages

This chapter is about the process of designing and managing a doctoral study, and uses the experiences of eight doctoral students to exemplify a series of themes and issues. It covers guidance on what students might include in their proposal when they first apply to take a PhD or an EdD; a brief section on the research training students can expect and the milestones they need to reach; an introduction to eight doctoral students; the differences between a master's and PhD/EdD; how students manage their time during their early years of study; key figures in the research process, including the supervisor(s); and the influence of research training courses.

- Chapter 3 *Jon Swain*: Designing your research in education

The chapter discusses issues around designing your doctoral research project. It looks at definitions of what constitutes a PhD or an EdD doctorate; how students' initial ideas may turn into a doctoral research project; a look at different types of research question and the process of how they may be developed; two major research designs and underlying approaches of deductive and inductive; the idea of positioning students' work in an **empirical and theoretical field**; a discussion of what constitutes a conceptual framework; definitions of the term 'methodology'; the role of theory and theorists in doctoral research; a discussion of the term, **principles of selection**; and some of the challenges students face when they are constructing their research designs.

- Chapter 4 *Will Gibson*: Constructing knowledge through social research: Debates in **epistemology** and **ontology**

This chapter introduces some of the key debates related to concepts of knowledge (epistemology) in the social sciences, and their relation to social phenomena (ontology). The chapter introduces terminology and debates, including **positivism**, **logical positivism**, **post-positivism**, **interpretivism**, **constructionism**, **relativism**, neo-relativism and **critical realism**. The chapter will argue that these remain important areas of debate that continue to have real impact on the political environment of social research.

- Chapter 5 *Jon Swain*: Ethical issues and considerations

The chapter provides a contribution to discussions on the ethics involved in social and educational research, and each of the four main research designs, or approaches, in this book (case studies, ethnography, experiment and surveys) have different sets of ethical principles and priorities. The chapter includes information on writing an ethical review; the role of Research Ethics Committees and the guidance; ethical guides and frameworks; key ethical principles; and research using the Internet.

- Part II: The application of the research designs

Each of the next five chapters (6–10) contain examples of research studies using the specific design presented and carried out by the author as a way of grounding the design in the real world with real life examples.

- Chapter 6 *Jane Hurry*: Experimental design

Experiment is one of the key research designs, constructed to address causal questions and to test hypotheses. It is therefore of value both for theoretical purposes and to inform evidence based practice about 'What Works'. The chapter covers definitions and epistemological principles underpinning experimental research; the key features of the research design; methods of analysis, interpretation and writing up; ethical issues; advantages and disadvantages of carrying out experimental design; and a list of appropriate research questions that can be use an experimental design.

- Chapter 7 *Charlie Owen*: Surveys

Surveys involve collecting information from a **sample** of people in order to draw conclusions about the wider **population** which they represent. To achieve this, it is essential that the sample is representative of the population. This chapter discusses the definition of a survey and examines the epistemological principles that underpin surveys, and there are further sections on how surveys are designed; how data are collected and analysed; the advantages and disadvantages of conducting surveys; examples and issues arising from surveys used in research; issues around non-response and other issues of **validity**.

- Chapter 8 *Rebecca O'Connell*: Ethnography

Situating ethnography within its historical and epistemological context, the chapter begins by tracing its origins to endeavour to understand the world 'from the native's point of view'. The chapter includes: definitions of ethnography; the epistemological

principles underpinning ethnographic research; key methods used in ethnographic research and key features of the research design; sections on analysis, interpretation and writing up and practical issues, including roles of the researcher; the advantages and disadvantages of carrying out ethnographic research; and an example of the author's PhD thesis that used an ethnographic approach to examine London childminders' perspectives of professionalisation.

o Chapter 9 *Mano Candappa*: Case studies

This chapter explores case study research as the study of the particular, and essential features of case study as a research strategy. It includes some of the key debates around and epistemological principles underpinning case study research, a discussion around the concept of **boundedness**, the different types and purposes of case studies, and case selection and design issues. A number of classic and more contemporary examples of case study research are used to illuminate the text, including one carried out by the author.

o Chapter 10 *Olga Cara*: Mixed methods in education research

Mixed methods design is increasingly popular in the field of social sciences and a growing number of studies make use of this methodological approach, that is, the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods within a single study. The chapter provides students with a working definitions of mixed methods research; the historical context of mixed methods designs; the epistemological issues related to mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches; the advantages and challenges of using mixed methods; some of the most popular mixed methods designs explained; the practicalities of carrying out a mixed methods study; and a series of real life examples of mixed methods research, some of which are conducted by the author.

o Chapter 11 *Jon Swain*: Summary and conclusions

The final chapter reminds readers of the book's main objectives and discusses some of the main processes and issues that arise when doctoral students construct their conceptual framework, including the research design. It reminds readers that the choice of design is dependent on the aim(s) of the research, the research question(s) and the methodology employed. The final section discusses issues around the doctoral thesis.

### (iii) How to use this book

The book can be used in a number of ways. The first five chapters in Part I concern more general issues such as ethical considerations, insights into how to develop a research design, and the theoretical understandings and assumptions that underpin a doctoral project or study. These cover important points and issues that most students will need, or wish, to familiarise themselves with and so it is suggested that most readers will want to read to read them.

Part II introduces the reader to different designs (survey, experimental, ethnography, case study) and also has a chapter on mixed methods. Students begin their doctoral studies with a range of backgrounds, interests and experiences of working in a variety of research

traditions. While some have relatively deep understandings of different research approaches and designs (perhaps from research training courses on their master's programmes), others have very little idea of what, for example, the characteristics of ethnography are, or even, perhaps, what the difference is between a method and a methodology. Whilst some students at the beginning of their studies already have their research proposals and designs more or less worked out, the majority will want to read more, discuss and reflect on what they read in this book and/or during their specific research training, and as a result some will begin to develop and change their research designs. Some will modify their original proposals a little, others more fundamentally. Therefore, while some readers may want to target specific chapters to find out more about a particular design, others will want to read about a number of research designs so they can discuss their particular features and principles with their supervisor(s) and other colleagues. This will help them gain a deeper understanding, and find out whether a particular design resonates with their own ideas and values in carrying out their own research study.

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### BOX 0.2

#### **A summary of the key points**

- The book is set in the field of education and is primarily about conceptualising and designing research for doctoral students and their tutors/lecturers/researchers.
  - The book discusses concepts and philosophical issues that inform research design, and looks at the application of these concepts in four classic designs: case study research, ethnography, experimental design and survey design, as well as issues involved in mixed methods research.
  - There is a section on how the book is structured and organised, and guidance on how readers can use the book.
  - Students begin their doctoral studies with a range of backgrounds, interests and experiences, and have different understandings of different research approaches and designs.
  - A summary is provided of the 11 chapters.
-



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