

interest for the successful completion of their studies, like the bestselling *Your undergraduate dissertation* and *Your Research project* by SAGE.

Social Research Methods is part of a new series called *SAGE Course Companions: Knowledge and skills for success*. This companion aims to provide the student with a simple guide to help find their way through the often overwhelming detail offered in research methods coursework. A key asset of the book lies in achieving the difficult task of obtaining a balance between oversimplification and too much detail. The book summarizes the main ingredients of the subject, their interrelationships and background.

The book comprises three parts. In the first part, there is a very useful ten page Introduction to the companion that gives guidance on how to use the book. The second part covers the core areas of the social science research methods curriculum. It is organized into 12 chapters that take each aspect of research and research methods in turn. It starts off with an overview of epistemological, ontological and theoretical issues in social research. Then, it deals with issues of research design, the nature of data and a review of the main research methods. Finally, there are chapters on *Sampling, Data collection methods, Experimental design, Quantitative data analysis, Qualitative data analysis and Ethics*. Each chapter in Part 2 contains some important features that facilitate the reader in comprehending and assimilating the material of each chapter. I found very useful the explanation of the main issues and the fact that new terms appeared in bold with a succinct definition; the terms in bold also appeared in a glossary at the end of the book. Very useful *tips* and *common pitfalls* were also inserted throughout the text. I also found the inclusion of a revision guide to the course material a very good idea.

The third and final part, as a true companion, offers guidance in study, writing and revision skills like sections on how to get the most out of your lectures, how to make the most of the seminars, revision hints and tips, exam tips, tips on interpreting essay and exam questions, essay writing, writing a literature review, writing a research proposal and writing up a dissertation or research project.

Overall, the author of the book is not overambitious about the depth of the content provided. As the writer of a short summary guidebook of methods he modestly states that the book 'is not to be used instead of a textbook or instead of wider reading' (p. 3). Put in another way, this is not a book that will make anybody feel competent to go on fieldwork and apply a method summarized in the book. It is about familiarizing oneself 'with the basics of the discipline when preparing for an exam or planning an assessed essay' (p. 3). Having said this, at the end of each chapter of the second part, there is a 'taking it further' section that focuses on the discussion of a particular method or issue of considerable complexity and then also there is a section of 'questions to ponder' that gives very useful food for thought along with some possible answers. Finally, there is an additional section of 'references to more information' that points to authoritative texts in the field.

To conclude, Walliman is well equipped to reach out to interested audiences and share his considerable expertise and perspectives thus providing an easy to read companion, for a comprehensive research course, that goes from philosophical to practical issues. And we should not forget that this paperback with the wide-ranging coverage and practical suggestions, presented in 224 pages, can be purchased for only £12.99.

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Gifted children – a guide for parents and professionals

Edited by Kate Distin

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This book provides an informative exploration of the gifted mind and the social and emotional needs of gifted children and their families. Its group of authors all previously worked in the UK as

volunteer counsellors for the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC). Several are also parents of gifted children.

This is not an academic text based on rigorous research, and the authors identify this from the outset, reporting that their knowledge is limited to certain types of giftedness, according to the experience of the individual contributors, and that therefore some groups of gifted children are less well covered. The subject matter is biased towards accounts of the difficulties faced by gifted children and their families. I found the book descriptive and anecdotal, based a good deal on generalizations and observations of clients who presented for counselling and support. The authors' aim is to explore the twofold theme of helping gifted children and their families find value in their difference, while finding a place for themselves in the wider (non-gifted) world.

From the outset I felt a lack of clarity about the criteria being used to categorize children as 'gifted'. A sub-section of the introduction titled 'What is Giftedness?' first describes a normal distribution curve, and then in an overly general way identifies 'say the top . . . five percent' (page 14) as being gifted. Taking a narrow definition based upon intellectual ability excludes children who are gifted and talented in other domains (e.g. creative or sporting or linguistic talents or intelligences).

Following the introduction, there are three parts in this book. Part 1 is collaboratively written. This section explores what it means to be typically gifted and considers the impact that giftedness can have on families. A useful style point here is that each chapter ends with some key bullet points for the reader, together with references and useful contact addresses for those wishing to explore issues further. The end of this section also explores the relationship between gifted children and their families and schools, an area of particular interest to me as an educational psychologist working within a Local Authority.

In Part 2, individual authors present chapters about individual areas of expertise, for example, gifted adolescents, gifted children with Asperger syndrome or other special educational needs.

Finally Part 3, also written collaboratively, is actually one concluding chapter, and reinforces the message of self-acceptance and communication. Parts 1 and 3 have some reflective questions placed in shaded boxes beside the text. The questions are posed to parents of gifted children reading the book to promote reflection and are optional.

While there is no statutory requirement that schools in England and Wales make specific provision for their gifted pupils, recent national initiatives from the DfES have raised awareness and since 2006 secondary schools and now in 2007 primary schools are being asked to identify their gifted and talented pupils, while Local Authorities are being asked to include gifted and talented children in training, policy and provision. My own experience has led me to observe much high-quality provision for gifted children being made within Local Authority schools. However, I felt the chapter focusing on education presented a view that gifted children placed within non-specialist provision would not have their needs adequately met. The book warns parents in very general terms that schools: can be an arena for intensifying intellectual and social problems; may fail to take account of individual learners' needs; may undertake inadequate baseline assessment; can fail to adequately differentiate or extend the curriculum or pace their teaching inappropriately. This chapter describes in some detail ways which parents can prepare for difficult meetings with teachers, be assertive in ensuring their messages are heard and push to ensure their gifted children have their educational needs met fully. The section offering parents advice on how to select a private school and the following chapter discussing home education of gifted children left me feeling that the authors were recommending these avenues to parents while suggesting an absence of adequate provision elsewhere.

The book describes itself as a guide for parents and professionals. I think parents of gifted children would find it highly supportive and informative, particularly the contacts it offers with other organizations. Professionals working to support families would also find it helpful as an introductory text. However, I would not recommend the book to schools or EPs who are looking for advice on school policy or specific approaches to support gifted children.