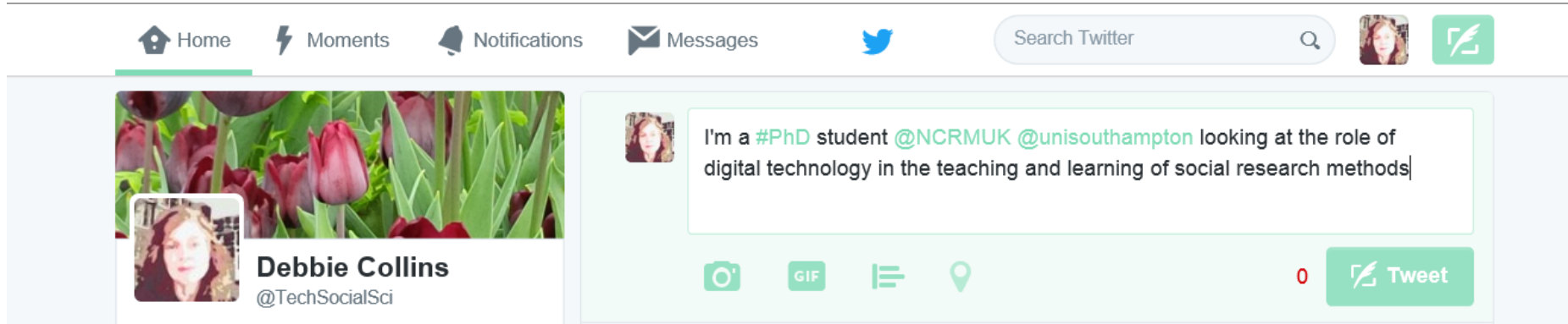# In search of a social science research methods pedagogy for the digital era: the story so far

Debbie Collins, University of Southampton

What I am going to talk about

- Introduction
- Definitions
- What we know (and what we don't)
  - Factors influencing choice of digital technology
  - Whether digital technology is enhancing or changing the ways in which social science research methods is being taught & learnt
  - How digital technology supports pedagogy
- Reflections and ways forward

About me and my research

I'm a #PhD student @NCRMUK @unisouthampton looking at the role of digital technology in the teaching and learning of social research methods

Debbie Collins
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Methodologist & Researcher at #NatCen, p/t PhD student | gardener, lover of music and life. Views expressed are my own.

🔗 natcen.ac.uk
📅 Joined April 2011

THE PEDAGOGY OF METHODOLOGICAL LEARNING

How are advanced social science research methods taught and learned?

news / about us / people / research / publications / training and events
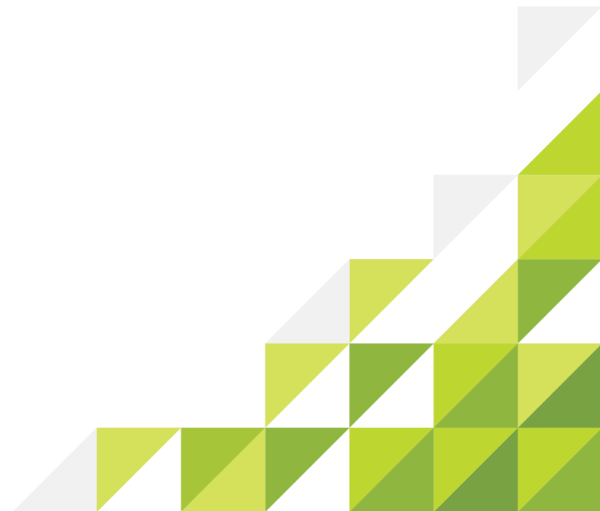
http://pedagogy.ncrm.ac.uk/
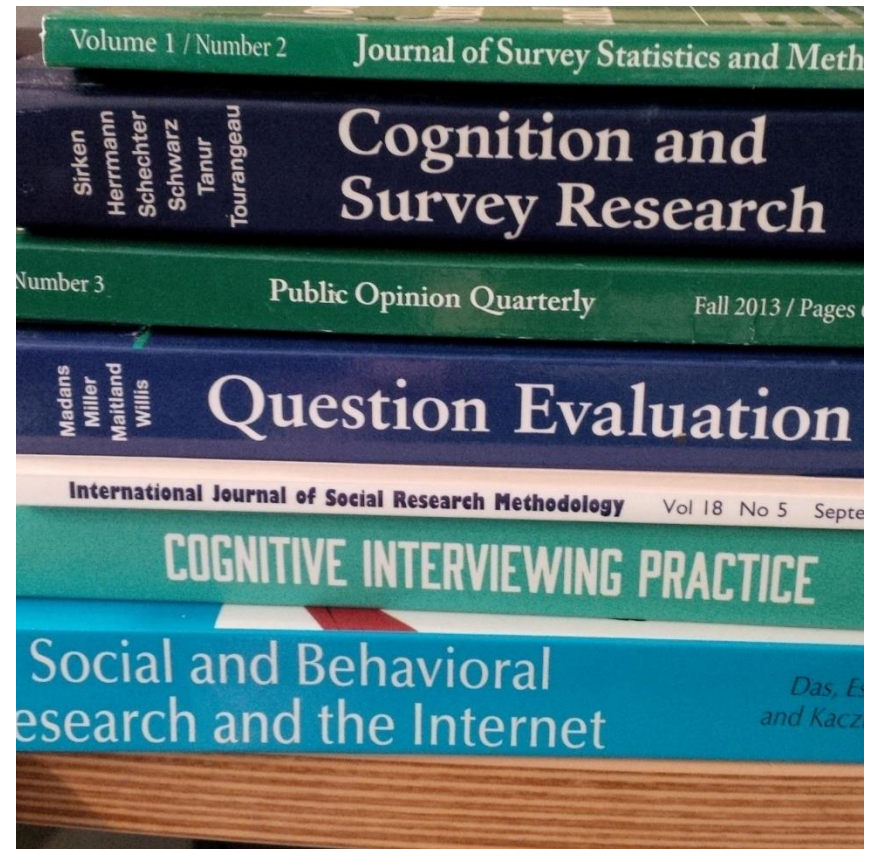
Evidence review

- In-depth literature review
- Papers from 2006 onwards
- Deep reading
- Thematic analysis
  - Themes developed based on wider reading of the literature

Key terms

Advanced social research methods (ASRM)

- taught (short) courses
- aimed at PhD students & practitioners
- assume prior knowledge
- methods more difficult/innovative

Digital technology in teaching & learning

- the use of computer technology (devices & software applications)
- the use & or storing of data & information
- the semantic web (Berners Lee et al., 2001)
- managed learning systems
- social-media systems

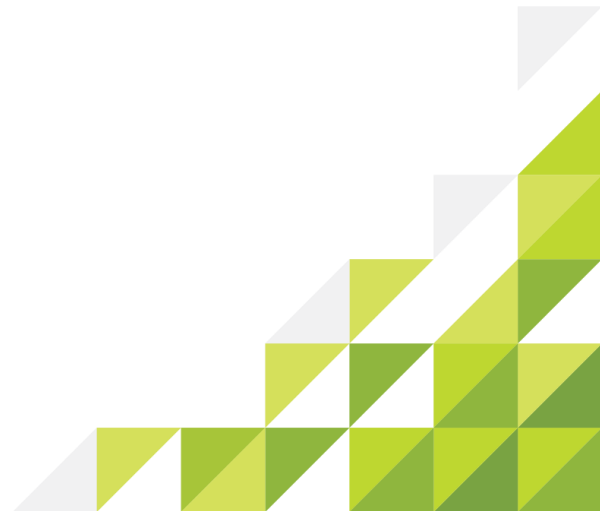# Pedagogy

"what people do in teaching and learning situations …what they perceive to be meaningful, important and relevant"

Nind, Kilburn, Luff (2015) The teaching and learning of social research methods: developments in pedagogical knowledge. International Journal of Social Research Methodology. 18 (5): p456

Teaching & learning ASRM

What makes the teaching & learning of ASRM challenging & distinctive?

Theory & practice

Critical thinking

Multi-disciplinary

Teaching through data

Assumes prior knowledge & skills **+** Complex decision making **+** Methods typically complex & sophisticated **=** More difficult to master

ASRM pedagogic goals & strategies

Active learning
- Making the research process visible
- Actively engaging students in aspects of the research process
- Highlighting connections between theory & practice

Learning by doing
- Facilitating learning through the experience of conducting research

Critical reflection
- Encouraging critical reflection on research practice

Kilburn, Nind & Wiles (2014)

What is the state of knowledge about the role of digital technology in the teaching and learning of ASRM

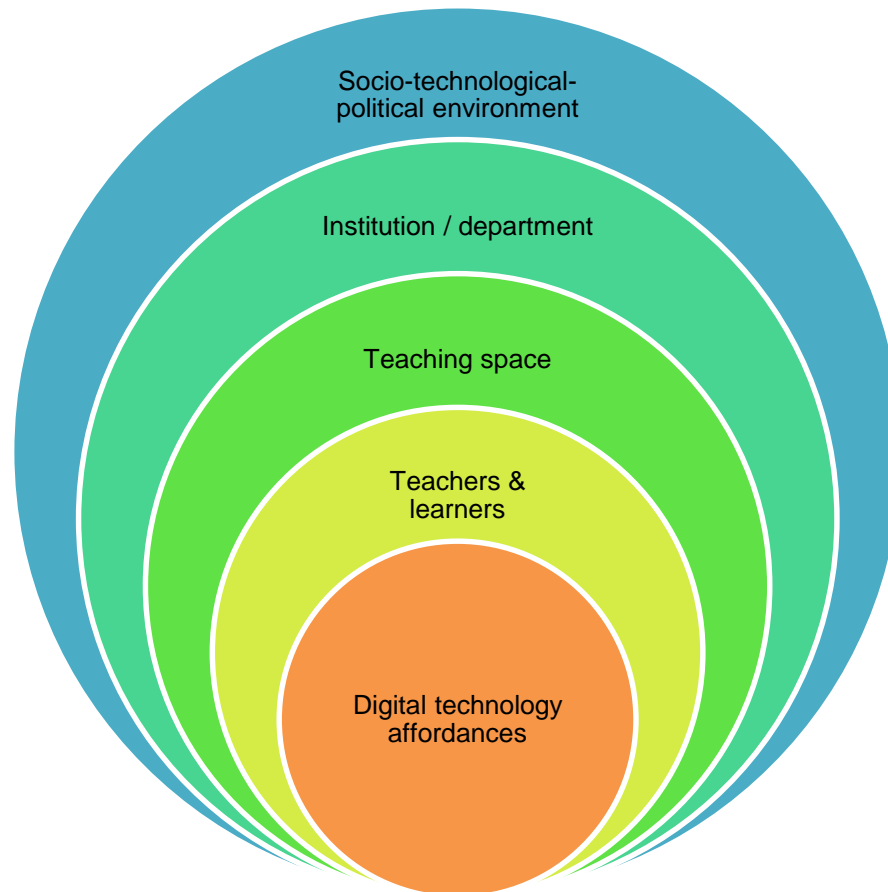# What digital technology is being used in the teaching & learning of ASRM?

Generic

- VLEs
- assessment tools
- discussion forums
- collaboration tools
- MOOCs
- social media

ASRM-specific

- data collections tools
- data analysis software
- data visualisation tools
- online data sets & resouces

Factors influencing choice of digital technology in teaching ASRM

Is digital technology enhancing or changing the ways in which ASRM is being taught and learnt?

Active learning	Learning through doing	Critical reflection	Additional affordances
• Demonstrating techniques & methods • Practising • Testing knowledge & understanding	• Designing, collecting, analysing data • Experimenting • Peer review	• Using data to discuss theory • Comparing different data sources on a topic • Reflecting on own/others research	• Collective learning space • Identifying problematic threshold concepts

How is digital technology supporting/ developing ASRM pedagogy?

Supports & promotes pedagogical goals

- facilitating active learning, learning through doing and critical reflection

Builds student / teacher confidence

- developing students understanding of data analysis software architecture & skills in using its features
- creating web interfaces that allow students to explore survey data with minimal guidance
- using interactive/collaborative tools to create collective, safe learning spaces

How is digital technology supporting/ developing ASRM pedagogy?

Helps students achieve their learning outcomes	• practising ASRM skills & exam technique • receiving regular, fast feedback • identifying problematic threshold concepts
Facilitates communication	• between students, students & teachers, students and the outside world
Assists with breaking down barriers to learning	• facilitates access to learning resources • time & space

Reflections and ways forward

My research questions

Are different pedagogic strategies needed for different ASRM learning environments (completely online or blended?)

What role can digital technology play in the teaching and learning of concepts and ideas that underpin ASRM?

What role can digital technology play in ensuring ASRM students have threshold concepts in place?

Is digital technology being used to facilitate students in becoming fluent in the language of ASRM? Does this fluency facilitate new ways of thinking & forms of practice?

How is digital technology being used to facilitate ASRM critical thinking?

How can digital technology support the learning through doing of ASRM?

Questions for you

How are you using digital technology in your teaching?

How is the use of digital technology affecting/ developing your teaching practice?

How has your use of digital technology in your teaching helped your students' learning?

Your questions

Thank you

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