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**Title:** A 'jigsaw' methodology for early childhood research: a flexible and reflexive approach

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**Example citation:** Murray, J. (2013) A 'jigsaw' methodology for early childhood research: a flexible and reflexive approach. Panel Presentation presented to: *British Early Childhood Education Research Association (BECERA) Conference 2013: Researching Children's Lives: Questions of Practice & Methods, Birmingham, UK, 20-21 February 2013.*

**Version:** Presented version

<http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/5783/>





# A 'Jigsaw' Methodology for Early Childhood Research: A flexible and reflexive approach.

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# The Young Children as Researchers (YCaR) Study (Murray, 2012)

- Young children are marginalised from the academy (Redmond, 2008)
- Aim: to reconceptualise ways in which young children aged 4-8 years are researchers and may be recognised as researchers (Murray, 2012)
- Adopted / adapted academy's modes of working

## Study process

- Phase I: Professional Early Years and Educational Researchers (PEYERs)
- Phase II: Children and practitioners in ECEC settings
- Phase III: Children and families at home

# Phase I

## Multiple Methods

**Table 1- An overview of Phase I participants**

Phase I Method	Pilot survey	Survey	Interviews	Focus Group
<b>Perspectives sought from...</b>	2 PEYERs (Professors)	20 PEYERs	9 PEYERs	5 PEYERs
<b>Location</b>	2 universities	2 universities	1 university 1 participant home	1 university
<b>Sampling type</b>	Initial sampling (Charmaz, 2006) Purposive (Robson, 1993)  1 x educational research 1 x ECEC research	Initial sampling (Charmaz, 2006) Purposive and convenience (Robson, 1993)  Educational and ECEC research	Theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006) Purposive and convenience (Robson, 1993)  All educational research	Theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006) Purposive and convenience (Robson, 1993)  All ECEC research
<b>Selected because...</b>	Highly knowledgeable and experienced regarding epistemological issues and English research in fields of education and ECEC. Willing to give time.	Knowledgeable and experienced regarding epistemological issues and English research in field of education. Willing to give time.	Knowledgeable and experienced regarding epistemological issues and English research in field of education. Willing to give time.	Knowledgeable and experienced regarding epistemological issues and English research in field of ECEC. Willing to give time.

# Phase II

## Multiple Methods

*Table 1: Stage 2 participants*

Ash Setting	Class of 7-8 year-old boys and girls (n=32) and their practitioners (n=2).
Beech Setting	4-5-year-old boys and girls (n=46) in an ECEC unit and their practitioners (n=7).
Cherry Setting	4-5-year-old boys and girls (n=60) in an ECEC unit and their practitioners (n=6).

*Table 2:  
Multi-modal approach to  
collecting data  
(Clark and Moss, 2011)*

	Documents (e.g. planning, school prospectus)	Practitioners' Analysis sheets
Parent Analysis sheets	Live Observations	Interview conversations
Children's Artefacts	Child Analysis sheets	Focus Groups
Photographs	Video observations	Field notes

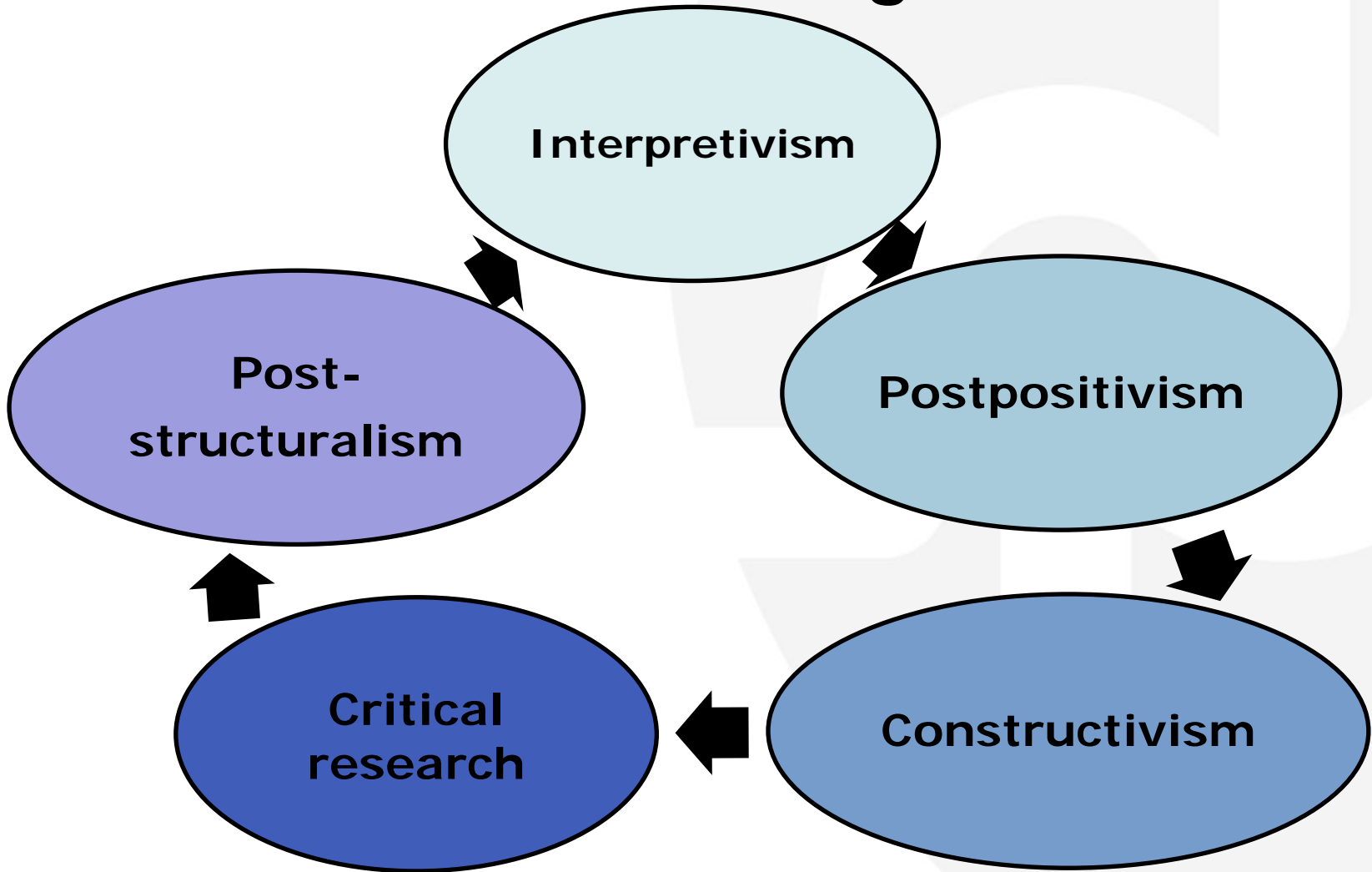
## Phase III - Multiple Methods

<i>Table 4: Stage 3 'Home' Focus Children</i>	<i>Ash Setting</i>		<i>Beech Setting</i>		<i>Cherry Setting</i>
<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Annie</i>	<i>Billy</i>	<i>Gemma</i>	<i>Harry</i>	<i>Martin</i>
<i>Gender</i>	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Boy
<i>Age during home fieldwork</i>	8 years	8 years	5 years	5 years	5 years
<i>Living with</i>	Mother (MTHR-A) Father (FTHR-A)	Mother (MTHR-B) Father (FTHR-B) Sister (SIS-B) – aged 9 yrs	Mother (MTHR- C) Father (FTHR-C) Brother (BRO-C) – aged 8 yrs	Mother (MTHR- D) Father (French) (FTHR-D) Brother (BRO-D) – aged 4 yrs	Mother (MTHR-E) Father (FTHR-E) Sister (SIS-B) – aged 4 yrs

<b>Table 18: Phase III Multi-modal Methods (Clark and Moss, 2001; 2011)</b>		Interview Conversations
Observations	Focus Groups	Informal discussions
Field notes	Children's artefacts	Photographs
Video recordings	Audio recordings	Research Behaviour Framework (RBF) Analysis Sheets



# Plural Paradigms

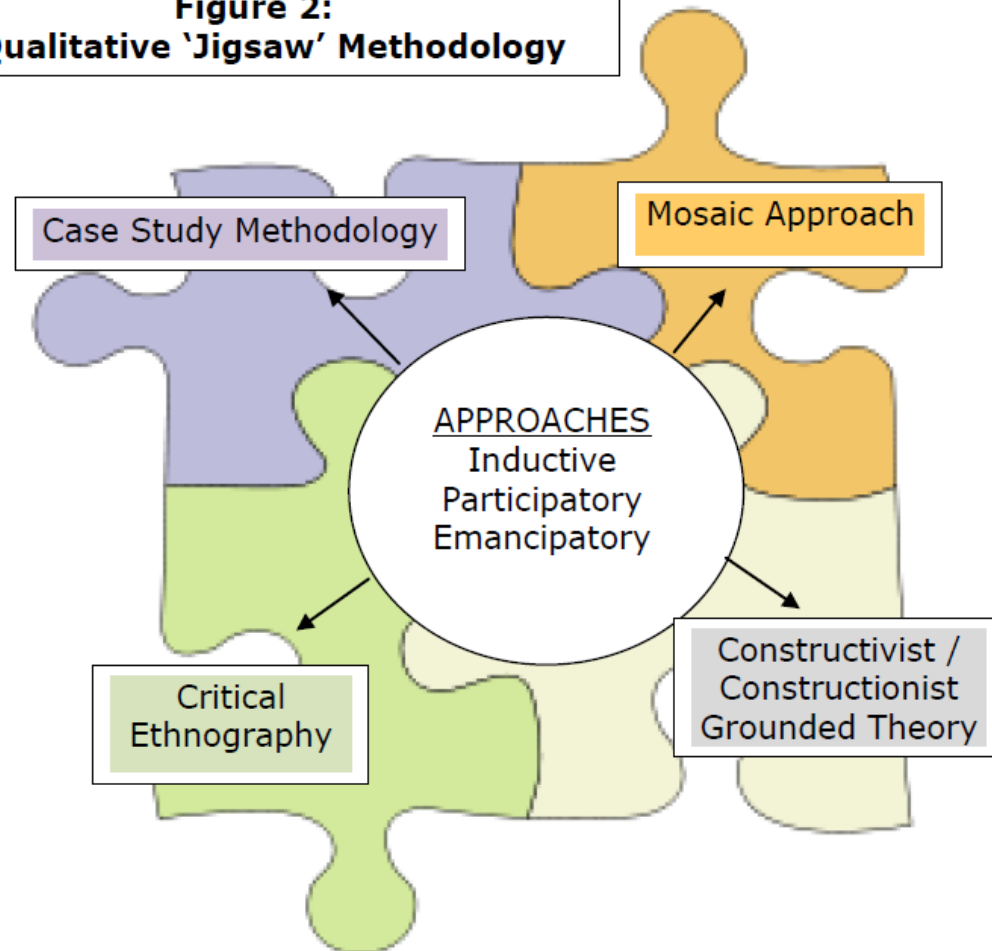






# Jigsaw Methodology

**Figure 2:  
A Qualitative 'Jigsaw' Methodology**





## Reflections...

- Rather than imposing a rigid rubric that overpowered participants, the dynamic, reflexive, co-constructed 'jigsaw methodology' was responsive to participants' perspectives and engagements as the YCaR study progressed.
- Walking the talk counted...
- The study was concerned with social justice and addressed it by adopting a model which promoted *de facto* social justice.



- Rich copious data were co-constructed with participants
- The study's aim was achieved
- Children, parents, practitioners and academics engaged in social interaction with mutual respect
- The study attempted to equalise relationships
- Communication was key
- Children were researchers and participants, not objects or subjects



## But...

- I had to 'sell out to the norms and forms of...research' from the start (Griffiths, 1998: 139) because it was my doctorate
- My own dynamic positioning along the 'insider' / 'outsider' continuum (Griffiths, 1998) was most challenging in settings and my attempts to assume 'insider' status were never fully successful there.
- It was different in homes...
- Commitment to reciprocity and a recursive approach for verification (Charmaz, 2006; Carspecken, 1996; Clark and Moss, 2001) elicited significant complexities in terms of time, organisation, sampling and data generation.



## Final Thoughts...

- The jigsaw methodology is not a prescription or a recipe
- The jigsaw methodology is an organic model that constantly adapts to its environment, as required by those in the environment.
- The jigsaw methodology was demanding and complex to co-ordinate
- But...the jigsaw methodology provided a respectful, egalitarian way to engage in research **with** children, their parents and practitioners and the academy.
- You can do it and you can make it your own, according to your needs in your world