

SECTION ONE: THE CONTEXT

In this section we set the context and scene of the research and of the book. The section consists of two chapters. The first is the introduction to the book, which outlines the research aims and synopsis of the book. We provide the rationale for our approach, explain our methods and how they differ from much recent research in this field and then offer an initial exposition of our use of the concept of 'social', which is developed further in Chapter 2 and then runs throughout the book. We then provide a synopsis of the chapters of the book to give the reader an overall map of the design. The second part of this Section consists of chapter 1, in which we discuss the educational background and debates that surround current explanations for low achievement in numeracy in schools and we outline alternative ways that the research and the book approach these issues. In particular we indicate our shift from the dominant explanation focused on 'school effect' to looking at the implications of 'home effect', citing literature from studies in various countries. We describe some of the alternative models that have been proposed to either the deficit or the social engineering models for enhancing the schooled performance of children from 'non-traditional' backgrounds and offer a bridging position. Finally we locate the study in the broader context of the Leverhulme funded research programme at King's College London, that has also provided the basis for other volumes in this series.