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## THE RESEARCHER

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Sociology is more like a passion. The sociological perspective is more like a demon that possesses one, that drives one compellingly, again and again, to the questions that are its own. (Berger, 1966: 36)

The researcher experience is not just peripheral to the research and should thus have a place in the reporting of the research. We think it is time the researcher experience be given more prominence than just a discussion in doctoral seminars and as an add-on in presentations at some research conferences. (Moch and Gates, 2000a: 3)

### The conduct of research

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Students and researchers are often confused about their role in research, for instance, on questions of ethics, relations with respondents, issues of how to secure funding, submitting for publication and response to criticism. This book is intended to be an 'accessible' introduction to the experience of conducting research. It attempts to address the researcher's role – not as usual through a discussion of the methods used, but as an 'advice-cum-comforter' book on how to approach research. The kinds of subjective problem that

researching produces, the ways to communicate research, the response to the sharing of research findings, including publications, and other practical issues are helpfully discussed. The objective is to outline the subjective 'side' of research as the researcher conducts research and communicates results. In this way, it is a grounded combination of the 'methodological' with actual research practice as it bears upon life contexts. At a time when there is time-pressure on the supervisory relationship between staff and research students and the increasing demands on researchers to initiate and complete research, this book should provide much needed support to the new and developing researcher.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students and researchers in the social sciences now have an excellent range of textbooks covering the span of research methods – on how to carry out the 'mechanics' of research or the step-by-step procedures of quantitative and, increasingly, qualitative research (see Bryman, 2004; May, 2001; Robson, 2002). There are also a number of comprehensive edited compilations of articles on broad areas and issues, in both in qualitative (see Bryman and Burgess, 1999; Bryman and Burgess, 1994, 1999; Crabtree and Miller, 1999; and Denzin and Lincoln, 2000a) and quantitative research and analysis (see Kaplan, 2004), and also on 'mixed methods' (see Bryman, 2006). There are, of course, innumerable books on specific research methods, procedures and analyses (e.g. interviewing, the survey, participant observation, case studies, statistical analysis, and discourse). In short, students wanting authoritative guides to research – the applicability of various methods and statistical and other analyses – are not devoid of choice.

Traditional textbooks have not generally considered the 'role' of the researcher in sufficient depth to indicate the 'feelings' involved in research. The nearest method, perhaps, to give such a consideration is participant observation, where questions of 'entering the field' and fieldwork relations have figured prominently. However, in sociology, anthropology and related substantive areas, a re-evaluation has been taking place for some years on the researcher's role, with questions of self, power-relations and commitment coming to the fore. In this regard, feminist research and theory has played a particularly important part in questioning the researcher's role within forms of interviewing, participant observation, broader fieldwork and even wider, more quantitative research practices. This book draws on some of these changes and discussions, but by emphasising the practical implications for the student/researcher intending to undertake research – faced with choices, pitfalls, responsibilities, relations and so on in the research contexts and practice.

This book is therefore intended to provide a ready guide to the subjective and practical concerns met in the research and writing process. Many research texts do not have sufficient breadth in dealing with the 'subjective'

aspects of research across all types of approach and the full length of the research process. Generally they do not describe in detail 'experiential-practical' issues, such as 'entering the field' and 'presentation/management', in terms of the relation between researcher and respondent. Some developments in research methodology have centred on a number of specific areas relevant to discussions of the researcher's reflection and biography. Certainly, there has been much discussion of issues such as the collaboration in research with those studied, and the possibilities for auto/ethnography and other 'self-writing' forms. But again, few sources fully engage with the issue of the researcher's role throughout the research process. One valuable text by Hallowell et al. (2005) gives some fascinating reports by numerous researchers reflecting on their emotions, self, others, control and ethics, but is not a detailed guide as such.

An important part of researcher experience is 'reflexivity'. Discussion of 'reflexivity' has generally centred on qualitative research practice, particularly due to an often close connection between 'researcher' and subject or context. Yet, an appreciation of the need to reflect on practice cannot be confined to qualitative procedures. In quantitative work there are research relations (although often limited) with respondents and colleagues, and non-research influences which require recognition and understanding. All researchers engaged in whatever method or procedure are active, experiencing beings who meet triumphs as well as difficulties in the routines of daily living. An intensive discussion of the various meanings of 'reflectivity' is more than is intended here. More prosaically, the focus will be on forms of 'monitoring' of action in research – what does and can take place in the active research life of the researcher in relation to material collected and the research context. It is not intended in this book to explore in detail 'experience' in existential, phenomenological or other terms, or to compare and contrast particular approaches and 'claims' (e.g. in varieties of feminist methodology and theory). Rather, the task is more 'immediate' – to give an indication of likely research experience and, without being too formulaic or prescriptive, provide a guide to coping with research difficulties while pointing to the 'positives' (e.g. the enjoyment and sense of achievement) of research. In summary, research practice is not to be seen as simply about the application of techniques, methodology and analysis. It is also about the researcher learning about, and reflecting on, the personal intricacies and social situation of the research process.

In short, the book aims to be a practical, helpful guide to an area relatively neglected in research methods textbooks – the researcher's experience of research. Included here is what to expect in research – not simply the negative, but also the positive challenges of carrying out a study – whether it be by interviews on others, survey work, in the research archive or some other activity. It is meant to be a source of guidance, 'comfort' and help to the

student and researcher. While many of the references are made to 'sociologists' and 'sociology', the discussion is also relevant to the broader social sciences. There is a need for a book that describes and answers such practical, subjective issues in research, not merely for qualitative research, where many of these issues have been raised, but also in quantitative research. Also, certain kinds of research, such as documentary and other forms of secondary research, must not be forgotten on this issue. The core audience for the text is final-year students undertaking courses in research methods and preparing for and undertaking a final-year dissertation, postgraduate thesis students, and less experienced researchers. Of course, 'research' takes place in various forms and by many organisations outside the university (see Finnegan, 2005), but here the focus is upon the academic context.

## What is research?

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A key initial question is what constitutes 'research'? What is meant by 'research'? At least in the UK, universities increasingly wish to distinguish those who are deemed 'research active' from among their staff. 'Research', in fact, can cover quite a wide range of activities with sometimes a separation made between 'research' and 'scholarship'. 'Research active' would include the publication of research, gaining funds, and supervision and examination of postgraduate research students. It could also include organising conferences, refereeing articles for journals, and grant applications, being on an editorial board, and being a member of research committees of professional organisations. Scholarship, on the other hand, may include course development, writing book reviews and textbooks, undergraduate external examining, conference attendance, being active in a professional body, acting as a book editor and contributing articles to non-professional publications (e.g. newspapers), and as including technological advances or creative artistic works, or consultancy roles, or even new teaching modes. More restrictively, 'research' in this book will be used to refer to the study of substantive issues and theoretical questions by the application of one or more research methods, and the interpretation and dissemination of 'findings'.

Research can be considered as a process rather than a single event; it is often likened to a 'journey' by the researcher (Roberts, 2004). It is 'a process that demands planning, forethought, commitment, and persistence. In fact, research is more of a journey than a task; and like any journey, it needs to be managed, navigated, and negotiated from early conception to final destination' (O'Leary, 2004: 15). The notion of research as a journey does not mean that it is a mere sightseeing trip or a guided tour, even if these involve observation and some reflection – and can involve a degree of stamina! In

an investigation, detailed observation and reflection are essential ingredients, and the physical demands of research can be high. In my own study in south Wales I remember struggling on foot up a rough track on dark, rainy winter nights to where I was staying in a farm house after interviewing in the local town. Research is a journey of self-knowledge and, at least to some extent, 'a way of life'.

Engagement in a study has effects on non-research life. For instance, we often refer to our research in non-academic contexts and in 'ordinary conversations' with others when they ask what we have been doing, or enquire of its progress. A discussion or a news item may well raise an issue which has a bearing on what we have researched. So, it is not only for the period when we have planned, carried out and reported our project, our activities also have a wider biographical 'relevance'. In this sense, 'the research' has a wider and longer effect on us than is often thought. We can find ourselves thinking about it or referring to it, sometimes unexpectedly, in various situations. In giving a lecture or seminar, we may use it as an anecdote, an illustration or as an aside. It may feature in a later setting to establish our credentials as someone who can speak 'about research' having carried some out, or to show to others and society more generally that we are 'useful' and deserve our rewards. In conversation, we may refer to what we have done or even claim some 'legitimacy' for what we are saying – 'When I was doing my research, I found that ...'.

While research is often seen as a 'journey', in my view, it can be further understood as an 'adventure':

In an adventure there is, in place of the involuntary routinization of time, a voluntary departure from the mundane world. Space is reorganized and reconstructed in an adventure so that its essence is experienced in the open territories, interstices, or reconstituted areas of the ordinary world. Finally, manner (or 'self') is inverted or perverted: the adventure permits man [sic] to assume new identities, adopt different styles, improvise on untried themes, and in general, prove untested mettle. (Lyman and Scott, 1984: 182-3)

A rather idealised view, containing something of sociological practice as an adventure, is held by Berger:

The sociologist, at his [sic] best, is a man with a taste for other lands, inwardly open to the measureless richness of human possibilities, eager for new horizons and new worlds of human meaning. It probably requires no additional elaboration to make the point that this type of man can play a particularly useful part in the course of events today. (Berger, 1966: 67)

This conception, although rather 'romantic', does give an idea of the excitement of social investigation and a sense of 'discovery'. There is the

exhilaration of the 'quest' of finding something new. Research can also be likened to an adventure in that while the end of the research is ear marked by deadlines and particular results may be expected, there is an 'openness' found not only in forms of fieldwork research, where it is encouraged, but even in more traditional survey methods.

### The research 'adventure' and its context

While likening research to an 'adventure' it must be borne in mind that a wide range of factors may influence the researcher's actions, including funding, research relationships, personal attachments, values and ethics, and so on. These can both constrain and guide practice:

The following groups may impinge on the sociologist's actions: clients, subjects, respondents, informants, research organizations, granting agencies, academic communities, students, colleagues, scientific and professional societies, and even local, national, and international political communities. ... A consideration of values and ethics in sociology must answer first this question: to whom are sociologists accountable when they make observations? My position is that they are responsible to many differing pressure groups. (Denzin, 1970: 326, 332)

### What is a 'researcher'?

The role of 'researcher' is one of a number of activities that can be assigned to the sociologist. The traditional investigative stance within sociology is informed by the idea of the 'objective researcher', who skilfully explores, in a detached manner, a particular question or (often pressing) social issue. Rather differently, the sociologist is someone with 'an agenda' relevant to social change:

... who wishes to emancipate, liberate, and work towards sometimes radical change. ... The nature of agenda-based research means that subjectivities take on a key role in the research process, and are managed only to the extent that they are made transparent and do not bias data analysis. The goals, aims, and objectives of this type of research need to articulate both the knowledge that is likely to result from the process, as well as the researcher's agenda for change. Similarly, the background and rationale of the study should clearly show the positioning of the researcher. Others can then be in a position to critically evaluate the nature and credibility of the knowledge produced, given named agendas and subjectivities. (O'Leary, 2004: 59)

The recommendation of 'clarity' regarding the position of the researcher should apply to all kinds of sociological and broader social science research.

The consideration of research practice and its connection with an 'agenda' led (since at least the 1960s) to an examination of its political context. Becker (1967) famously posed the question 'Whose side are we on?' when undertaking research. He argued that it is not possible to research without 'personal and political sympathies' intruding:

... the question is not whether we should take sides, since we inevitably will, but rather whose side are we on. ... In the greatest variety of subject matter areas and in work done by all the different methods at our disposal, we cannot avoid taking sides, for reasons firmly based in social structure. (Becker, 1967: 239)

Nicolaus famously argued that due to the increasingly expensive nature of social research, those who took part were 'compelled' to reach to the 'civil, military, and economic sovereignty' to 'prove themselves "useful" – a 'social fact' that was fundamental to 'any understanding of the politics of the organized sociological profession' (Nicolaus, 1972: 51):

In the post-war era the road to prominence, hence office, within the profession has been paved with research publication. Once he [*sic*] obtains financing for a research venture, the sociologist builds up, through publication, his professional reputation. This form of capital is then convertible into academic promotion, which yields better access to more research funds, permitting further publication, yielding further promotion, even closer proximity to the big money, and so on up, until, as supervisor of graduate students, the successful sociological entrepreneur is in a position to start and manage younger persons on the same spiral. The inevitable consequence of this career-pattern, if ability is held constant, is to reward servility. The structure is such that the achievement of prominence in the profession is a direct function of the decisions of outside financial powers. (Nicolaus, 1972: 51)

The important point here, whether or not we fully accept Nicolaus's radical view, is the need to place the sociologist's experience and practice within its socio-political setting. Giddens, for example, in a somewhat more anxious mode, points to the centrality of sociology in having both a broader understanding of social life as well as its vital role in current circumstances:

The sociological enterprise is now even more pivotal to the social sciences as a whole, and indeed to current intellectual culture generally, than it has ever been before. We live today, not to put too fine a point on it, in a world on a knife-edge between extraordinary possibility and global disaster. (Giddens, 1987: 17)

Finally, while research can be seen as an adventure, albeit in a changing political and societal context, it is also 'craft' that is part of the wider field of academic work:

Scholarship is a choice of how to live as well as a choice of career; whether he [*sic*] knows it or not, the intellectual workman forms his own self as he works towards the perfection of his craft; to realize his own potentialities, and any opportunities that come his way, he constructs a character which has as its core the qualities of the good workman. (Mills, 1970: 216)

## Images of sociology and the sociologist

Prospective students usually give an 'interest in people' as informing their decision to study sociology, or that the subject will enable them to help people, or inform social policy, social reform or social work. In broad terms, the reasons given for study centre on wanting to find out more about an area of social concern. Ultimately students want their endeavours to have some social value. However, there are a number of other conceptions or 'images' of sociology, and some of them are very pejorative – as a pointless activity squandering funds for research that could be better used elsewhere or using 'fancy' language to describe what we all know from 'common sense'. Of course, some of the views of sociology and its research may have a degree of truth in terms of an over-elaboration of theories and some research may not be particularly 'valuable'.

In terms of social research, the sociologist is sometimes described as a kind of 'technicist' concerned with the intricacies of research methodology or a compiler of social statistics (a kind of demographer) especially on pressing social issues. These conceptions are traditional views related to the pursuit of sociology as a 'science' (Berger, 1966: 22–3). Further views conceive sociology as a 'critical' activity, seeing society with the eye of an outsider (with some detachment), who observes the bustle of daily life and holds up its absurdities, injustices, and unintended outcomes as well as its 'humanity' for comment. Perhaps, unlike Berger, I would not stress the term 'science' so fully, but otherwise I would agree with the following:

The sociologist, then, is someone concerned with understanding society in a disciplined way. The nature of this discipline is scientific. This means that what the sociologist finds and says about the social phenomena he studies occurs within a certain rather strictly defined frame of reference. (Berger, 1966: 27)

In doing so, the sociologist 'will have to be concerned with the exact significance of the terms' being used and their meaning, while the sociologist is someone 'intensively, endlessly, shamelessly interested in the doings' of people (Berger, 1966: 28, 29). While Berger gives priority to the role of theorisation and understanding for its own sake, 'research', in its broadest sense, we can argue, as exploring, gaining information and assessing material, is ultimately very much involved in the processes of theorisation. The



sociologist may be seen in a further 'reflective' biographical light. For example, sociologists of the Chicago School, such as Robert Park and W.I. Thomas, were very aware of the transition they had made from small-town, rural backgrounds to become part of bustling, rapidly growing twentieth-century city. Their personal migration – within the migration of millions of others – was a main concern, not simply for the social difficulties created for groups, but also for the individual effects, including their own outlook (see Park, 1928). It is this view of the sociologist reflecting on his or her own social settings, work activities and life transitions in relation to wider social processes to which I have the greatest sympathy and attachment.

Within sociology (and many social and natural science disciplines) much discussion had taken place in recent years on how to change common images of research work. The intention has been to show the benefits of research and wider study, and relay findings through the media and in a manner which will not undergo undue simplification according to certain 'sensationalist' news values. Academia has become increasingly aware of the 'value' of PR and the requirements of the 'market place'. This is reflected in the publicity given to research delivered at conferences or reported in journals. Public and private sponsors increasingly want the research they support to have an 'impact' – a media visibility which can affect the public and impress other organisations, including governments. The 'dissemination' of findings, often rather overlooked in the past, has become an increasingly important part of the 'research process' rather than an afterthought. For various reasons, therefore, academics have become more aware of the public context, and anxious to dispel common portrayals of academic research as self-indulgent, obscure, non-practical and jargon-laden. There is a need to establish the 'legitimacy' of research and to overcome the at least perceived disjunction between academic and public discourses on the nature of sociological and other research practices.

## Research roles and researcher characteristics

### From monk to salesperson?

The researcher in sociology has a much wider set of roles and requires a broader set of abilities than most textbooks on 'methods' allow for. At times the researcher will feel more like a monk or a prisoner, contemplating alone the research activity being undertaken in an unfamiliar setting – perhaps spending time in hotels while 'in the field'. In fact, research can be quite a lonely experience outside the academic department as one tries to make contacts, gain 'access' to different organisations or situations, and establish oneself, in relation to others, as a 'researcher'. The informants/subjects will

also have expectations of the researcher that have to be considered. For instance, in my own fieldwork research in Wales, I was often introduced by 'locals' as a 'writer' of a book on the area. At other points in the research I felt more like a salesperson, (uneasily) portraying the research and myself to an audience. Commonly, at the point of dissemination, it does often feel as if you are 'selling', and if you have written a book, of course, you are drawn into the publisher's sales campaign – you become a 'publicist'! At other times you feel like an entrepreneur seeking out opportunities – in putting forward your proposal for funds, giving a presentation on your research, in 'selling' your 'product'. It can be said that academic life generally is increasingly drawn into more commercial modes of operation.

After days spent poring over statistical results, transcribing interviews, making copious notes, assembling folders of materials, and weeks writing the research report, articles or book, research can seem a 'monkish' experience unless effort is made to break out and meet people! After the research is completed, it seems as though the experience was already long ago and has been turned into a 'performance' for conferences or even as part of presentations for more funds – again, a 'selling' of what has been done, or will be done. Research 'output' then seems to have become a 'commodity' which is justified according to 'objective' parameters by funders and evaluators, to be graded and audited. In this way, more funds are received and reputations established.

### What the researcher needs

Apart from the general administrative skills, researchers must obtain a range of 'technical' abilities (e.g. in collating materials, in using methods such as questionnaire design, and in means of interpretation) as well as an awareness of various methodological issues (e.g. questions regarding research ethics, access and dissemination). But, there are also various 'characteristics' which the researcher has to develop as part of the research activities. These include:

- patience
- stamina
- perseverance
- openness
- inquisitiveness
- discretion
- humour
- insight
- sensitivity
- organisation

Above all, 'reflection' is the most important characteristic needed by a researcher. It is not merely a feature associated with what are usually conceived as the 'technicalities' of methodology, but with the fuller life as a researcher – as part of interacting with others in a variety of research and related non-research settings. In short, we can advise the 'researcher – know thyself'!

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## Main aims

The aim of the book is to provide a discussion of the subjective aspects of research activities. It gives offers a lively guide to how to meet research problems by providing examples of research and hints and tips. In addition to advice and help, the book aims to be a source of reassurance for the researcher – a supportive framework for the researcher facing the 'subjective life' of the research process. It aims to bridge the gap between the piles of research 'guide books' and the 'actual' research that is intended or already underway.

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## Chapter outlines

Chapter 2, 'Researcher Styles, Roles and Contexts', considers the different styles of research and their status. It asks the prospective researcher to examine what it is to be a researcher and its personal importance. A number of practical issues which impinge on researcher experience are discussed, including how research ideas come about, networking and the search for funds, as well as how research relations are affected by the different social settings in which research takes place.

Chapter 3, 'The "Emotional" Aspects of Research', examines the 'subjective' side of research and how the researcher can cope with research difficulties. It argues that research involves 'emotional labour', a 'reflexivity', and the employment of a number of 'life skills'. Questions regarding collaboration with others and necessary sources of subjective support are raised, especially in relation to 'maintaining momentum' and dealing with anxiety and stress when they occur.

Chapter 4, 'Entering the Research: The Presentation of the Researcher's Self', begins by examining the reasons for a study and the entrance to research. An argument is offered for the role of 'sociological imagination' and for a fuller recognition of the interconnections of research with our 'daily lives'. The chapter addresses the 'hold-ups' of research and how to meet them. It also discusses the nature of the 'PhD experience' and how such postgraduate study should be approached.

Chapter 5, 'Interpretation in Research', introduces the researcher as interpreter and theorist within the conduct of research as a whole, and not simply during the collection and understanding of materials. It discusses the research diary, in which the investigator can record notes on his or her personal life as well as observations and insights that can be a form of 'self-analysis' and a source for later reflection. Such notes play an important part in informing the 'writing-up' of the report. The chapter outlines the difficulties and the satisfactions that arise in interpreting materials and how interpretations and new ideas can be organised.

Chapter 6, 'Writing Research', points out that the researcher is also an author who is writing for an audience. Considered here are the nature of academic writing, working with others, and researcher autobiographies and 'confessions' of research practice. The chapter also considers the writing process in relation to identity and how to prepare for writing.

Chapter 7, 'Dissemination', examines what is meant by 'dissemination'. It considers the different audiences for research findings, including those researched, funding bodies and the media. Also included is an outline of the various forms of dissemination, for example the doctoral thesis, research report or briefing, conference papers, book and journal articles, books, the internet and in teaching, and how these are undertaken. In all of these, it is argued, the 'biographical self' of the researcher is implicated.

'Reactions to research' dissemination, the subject of Chapter 8, can vary a great deal. As an example, the feedback to authors in submitting and receiving decisions by editors is examined. The researcher 'invests' a large part of him or herself in the research process. It is not surprising, therefore, that the reactions of others can, at different times, have a deflating or an uplifting effect. In writing an article, book or report, and in giving a presentation, the researcher exposes him a herself to others' responses. It can therefore be a time of vulnerability but also of personal reward.

After the completion of research and the writing up, if not before, the question arises of what is the next step? More research? The pursuit of a broader academic career? Or something entirely different? Of course, the research may be part of an existing career plan and be part of personal development in a professional occupation outside academia. Chapter 9, 'What next in my research?', returns to the questions of researcher roles and identity, and how the research is to be fitted into the CV and future career.

As a summary, Chapter 10, 'Conclusion: The Researcher's Experience of Research', considers the research experience again in terms of emotions, the biography of the researcher, researcher identity and insights that the research 'adventure' can bring in relation to the researcher's self.

## Key Points to remember on researcher experience

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Points to keep in mind before, during and after research include the following:

- While research is part of your life, do not let it rule it!
- Research brings responsibilities to those you research, and obligations to colleagues, the researched, funders, family and friends, and perhaps to society as a whole.
- To be a researcher is to be curious, inquiring and reflective.
- You do not have to like people, but you should find them interesting!
- Research is an adventure – not as a reckless, unplanned exercise, but a period of discovery.


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## Summary

As a researcher, I am most drawn to a notion of research not simply as the application of 'methods', but as a practice that can be likened to an adventure – a series of new relationships, of new 'things' found, and as a period of self-discovery. This chapter has outlined a number of issues in the research process which will be explored further in subsequent chapters. In summary, the position taken on research practice is as follows:

- The research experience is integral to the conduct of research.
- The research process is part of the biographical life of the researcher.
- The researcher brings expectations, anxieties and hopes to a study, and experiences a wide range of feelings during the research process.
- The researcher and the researched share a human situation as biographical actors.

## Further reading

 N. Hallowell et al. (eds) (2005) *Reflecting on Research* (Maidenhead: Open University Press) is an interesting compilation of comments (on emotions, self, others, control and ethics) by wide range of researchers on their previous research. An older study which looks at the interconnections between research activities and the private life of the researcher is J. Platt (1976) *Realities of Social Research*. London: Sussex University Press Chatto and windus. L. Blaxter et al. (2001) *How to Research* (2nd edn, Buckingham: Open University Press) is a very informative, step-by-step guide to the research process using exercises, boxes and extensive further reading; it is a very practical text but is not so much slanted towards the experience of research – the anxieties and problems and how to deal with them. Another useful text is A. Coffey's (1999) *The Ethnographic Self* (London:

Sage), which reflects recent discussion of the researcher in ethnographic work without the more practical remit required here. H.S. Becker's (1998) *Tricks of the Trade: How To Think about Your Research While You're Doing It* (Chicago: Chicago University Press) is informative and useful, but is focused on more theoretical-methodological concerns and again does not have the more 'accessible' form and style adopted in this text. On researcher experience in a number of research contexts, see S.D. Moch and M.F. Gates (eds) (2000b) *The Researcher Experience in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage. A number of 'readers' on research methods, commonly in qualitative research, draw attention to researcher experience to some extent. For example, see D. Silverman (2000) *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook* (London: Sage) Chapters 2–3 for accounts by research students, while C. Seale et al. (eds) (2004) *Qualitative Research Practice* (London: Sage), some chapters of which take a 'somewhat autobiographical approach' which cautions against too confessional an approach. There are very many practical texts which have some relevance. For instance, see G. Birley and N. Moreland (1998) *A Practical Guide to Academic Research* (London: Kogan Page); A. Fink (2005) *Conducting Research Literature Reviews* (2nd edn, London: Sage); M. Denscombe (2003) *The Good Research Guide* (2nd edn, Buckingham: Open University Press); B. Hawkins and M. Sorigi (1985) *Research: How To Plan, Speak and Write about it* (Berlin/New York: Springer Verlag); L.F. Locke et al. (1993) *Proposals That Work* (3rd edn, London: Sage); and N.S.R. Walliman (2000) *Your Research Project* (London: Sage); Blaxter et al. (1998) has a good discussion and offers advice on areas such as networking and getting published, and other elements of an academic career.