HOW TO RESEARCH
SECOND EDITION

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THINKING ABOUT RESEARCH

Introduction

This book is about the practice and experience of doing research. It is aimed at those, particularly the less experienced, who are involved in small-scale research projects. It is intended to be useful to both those doing research, whether for academic credit or not, and those responsible for teaching, supervising or managing new researchers.

The book is written in an accessible and jargon-free style, using a variety of different forms of presentation. The text has been divided into relatively small, linked sections. It is supplemented by a series of exercises, designed to help you progress your research thinking. It has been illustrated by the inclusion of a range of examples, lists, diagrams and tables in 'boxes', as well as through the inclusion of hints and relevant quotations from researchers in the text.

Suggestions for further reading are listed at the end of each chapter, with an indication of their contents. A list of the references used in the text is provided at the end of the book.

The book focuses on process rather than just methods, though these are also considered. It aims to demystify research, recognizing the everyday skills and techniques involved. It presents research as a series of stages, but without suggesting that the research process is either simple or linear.

The book is multidisciplinary in scope. It is designed to be suitable for those undertaking research in the social sciences, as well as in related subjects such as education, business studies and health and social care.

The purpose of this opening chapter is to explore the nature of the research process in the social sciences, to outline the contents of this book and to suggest how you might make use of them. The chapter is organized into the following sections:

- **What is research?** Different understandings of the nature of research, and of who can do it.
- **Why research?** Your motivations for undertaking research.
- **What is original?** Debunking the idea of originality.
- **Truth, power and values.** The context for your research.
- **How to use this book.** What you will find in it, and how to make your way through it.
- **What is different about this edition?** What has changed, and what has been added, since the first edition.

The chapter ends with a summary.

☐ What is research?

The nature of research

We see and hear headlines and stories like those reproduced in Box 1 every day. Research and its results are indeed familiar to us.

You will have had research findings presented to you many times – through books, newspapers and television programmes – in the form of theories, articles or reports. Thus we learn, for example, that the United Kingdom has the highest divorce rate in Europe, or that the price of cars and petrol is also relatively high here. If you are, or have been, a student, you may have written many essays or assignments which 'compare and contrast' or 'critically analyse' the research of others.

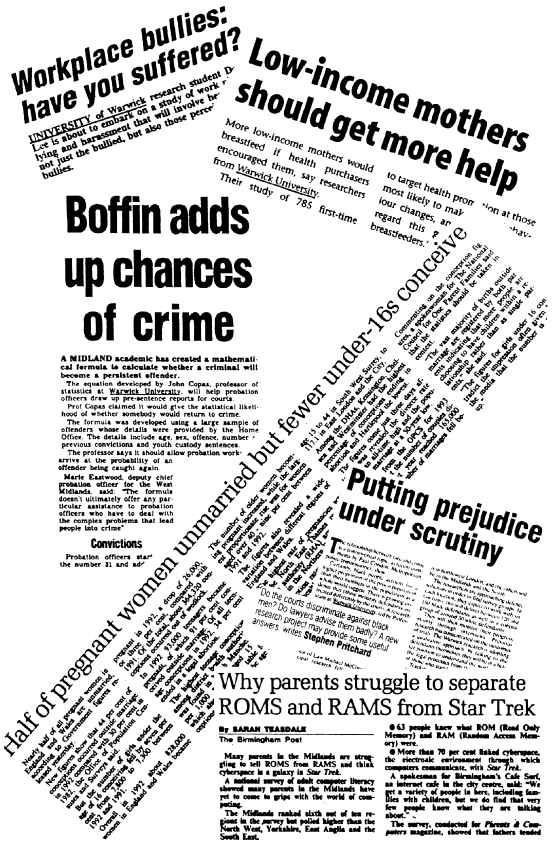
We are also continually in contact with research as workers and citizens. Changes in our working practices are justified by the reports of in-house research teams, or those of external consultants. Outside of work, you may have taken part in research through a consumer survey held in a shopping precinct on a Saturday afternoon. You will probably have taken part, whether directly or indirectly, in one of the most extensive research surveys conducted: the national census.

So we may say to you that you are already an expert when it comes to being a recipient of research. You will certainly have opinions. You don't think so? Try Exercise 1: try yourself out!

Now compare your answer to some of the common understandings of research listed in Box 2. Did your view match any of those we selected? If it did, we told you that you were already an expert! If you had a different view, well done!

Do you think 'I could never do research'? Do you feel even the slightest sense of self-identity with this view? If so, read on. Our intention in this book is to

Box 1: Research in the headlines



Exercise 1: Your own understanding of research

How do you view research? Complete the following sentence in no more than 20 words to convey your view of research.

Research is . . .

give you the skills and the confidence that you will require to take you successfully from the initial idea to a completed piece of research.

Let us continue by opening up your mind to some of the realities of doing research. In Box 3 you will find a list of some of the things about research which

Box 2: Ten views of research

1 Research is about proving your pet theory.
2 Research is something done by academics or experts.
3 Research is about establishing the facts.
4 Research is objective.
5 Research is about justifying what your funder wants to do.
6 Research can prove anything you want.
7 Research is time-consuming.
8 Research is scientific.
9 Research is removed from reality.
10 Research cannot change anything.

Note: None of these views is necessarily endorsed by the authors.

Box 3: Ten things you didn't know about research

1 Research *is* very time-consuming.
2 Research is subjective.
3 Research is often boring, but can also be fun.
4 Research can take over your life.
5 Research can be much more interesting than its results.
6 Research is about being nosey.
7 Research can be done in many ways.
8 Research uses everyday skills.
9 Research gets into your dreams.
10 Research can lead you in unexpected directions.

your previous experience may not have told you. You may find it interesting to compare these with the views already listed in Box 2.

Yes, you *can* do research! Many of the skills you need are commonplace and everyday. They include the ability to ask questions, to listen, to make notes and to think.

If you doubt this, have a look at the section on **Everyday research skills** in Chapter 3.

Yet for many, students and non-students alike, there is no doubt that the very word 'research' can be awe-inspiring. This may be particularly so for the new researcher, who can feel that to conduct and complete even a small-scale research study is well beyond their capabilities.

Let us repeat: you *can* do research! The main lesson to learn is that you need to practice your skills, read and think about research, and to build up your confidence. This book aims to help you in these processes.

Types of research

Point 7 in Box 3 states that research can be done in many ways. Even a brief review of writings on research will uncover a lengthy and potentially baffling list of types of research. These include, for example:

- pure, applied and strategic research;
- descriptive, explanatory and evaluation research;
- market and academic research;
- exploratory, testing-out and problem-solving research;
- covert, adversarial and collaborative research;
- basic, applied, instrumental, participatory and action research.

The basic characteristics shared by all of these different kinds or views of research are that they are, or aim to be, planned, cautious, systematic and reliable ways of finding out or deepening understanding.

To illustrate further this variety of approach and interest, Box 4 describes a number of examples of research projects in the social sciences. Do any of these have similarities with the research which you are undertaking, or planning to undertake?

Box 4: Examples of research

1 It took Eileen Barker more than two years from first making contact with the Unification Church to gain permission to undertake her research on her own terms. The decision in favour was 'not because they thought that I would necessarily support them – they did not . . . really know how I regarded the movement – but because I had been prepared to listen to their side of the argument' (Barker 1984: 15). But she was still subjected to a final 'test'. On New Year's Eve 1976, one of the American leaders came to her house with two British moonies. They discussed the research for an hour and left apparently satisfied. But the mystique in which moonies are commonly held led her children to spend 'several exciting but ultimately unrewarded hours searching for the "bugs" which they felt quite certain would have been placed in my study' (*ibid.*: 15).

2 Amer reports an experiment concerned to test whether training in test-taking skills could improve exam performance for English as a foreign language (EFL) students. Experimental and control groups were set up, with the former taught a series of skills: 'read carefully', look for 'clue words', time scheduling etc. The researcher administered two tests to the groups, one before (pre-test) the experimental group received instruction, and one (post-test) after. While the two groups were comparable in the pre-test scores, in the post-test the

experimental group's scores had improved more than the control group's. The experiment was useful, therefore, in indicating that assumptions about, for example, poor linguistic competence being a reason for low test scores might be inaccurate (Amer 1993).

3 Mary, a social work student taking an MA course as part of her professional updating, was required to complete a dissertation of 15,000 words. Her practice experience had suggested that there was little empirical work on the survivors of abuse. She was concerned that asking survivors of abuse to talk about the past would cause further anguish. She was also aware of her own limited time resources, within which she might feel a responsibility to offer some kind of ongoing support to her research participants. Her concerns about these issues led her to undertake a life history approach with a survivor of sexual abuse, whom she gained access to through her contacts in women's support networks. She offered to discuss all of the interview transcripts with her, and to provide her with a copy of the life history document. At the first meeting, she also discussed the likely support the respondent might need, and, on a clear contractual basis, they mutually agreed the parameters for this.

4 Stein's research was based on a review of the literature, where his aim was to indicate that 'refugee behaviour, problems and situations . . . recur in many contexts, times and regions' (Stein 1986: 5). His approach was to survey the literature not to identify gaps, as is common, but to show how much had already been done and was seemingly unrecognized in this area:

> Thus far this chapter has been a lament of unfulfilled refugee research opportunities and needs. It is better, however, to note how much good, even excellent, work has been done. Much of this work is sadly underutilized. The remainder of this chapter will describe some approaches to refugee research and some key resources. In making this survey it will try to follow the stages of the refugee experience.
>
> (*Ibid.*: 8)

5 The study, a multi-centre randomised controlled trial, was set up to investigate the effectiveness and safety of treatments for women with inverted and flat (non-protractile) nipples who want to breastfeed.

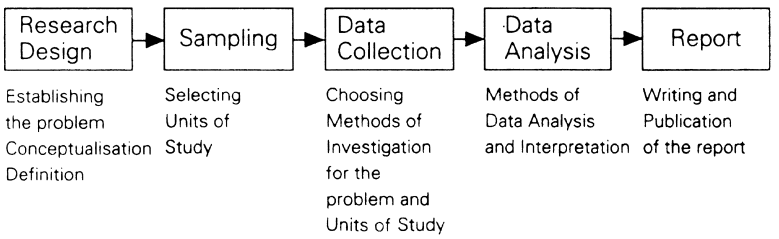
(Renfrew and McCandlish 1992: 81)

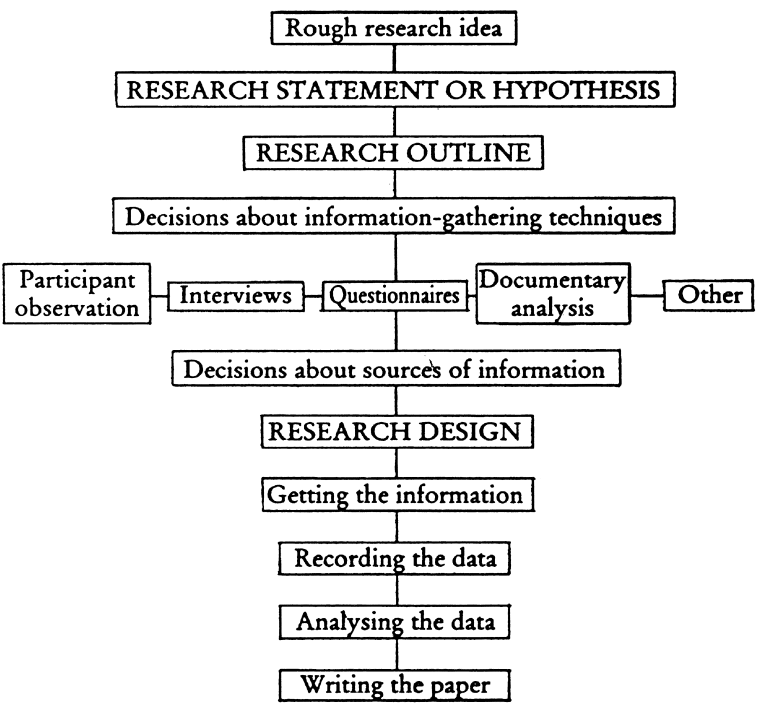
This research used two networks, one comprised of midwives and one through the National Childbirth Trust, to find volunteers. These were allocated to four trial groups using opaque randomization envelopes.

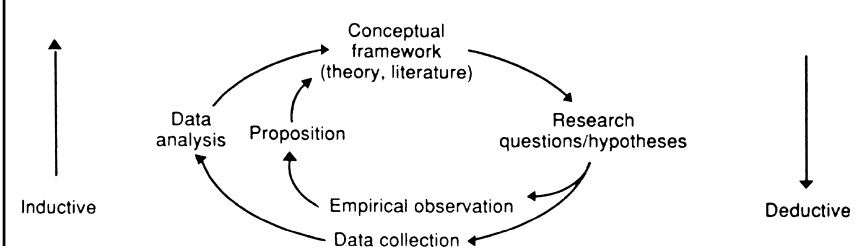
Representations of the research process

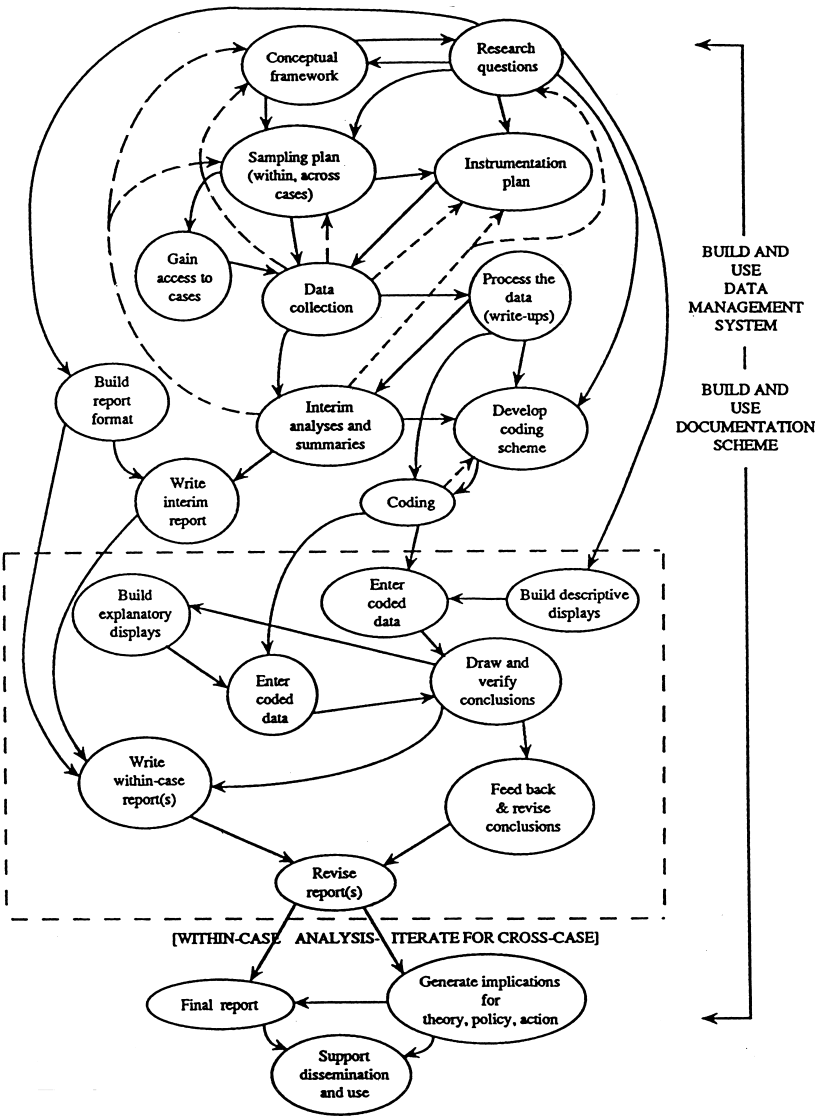
Just as there are a wide variety of views as to what research consists of, and great differences in actual practices as to what people research and how, so there are alternative perspectives of what the process of undertaking research should look like. A number of diagrammatic representations of the research process have been collected together in Box 5.

Box 5: Representations of the research process









Sources: (a) Burgess (1993: 1).
(b) Kane (1985: 13).
(c) Rudestam and Newton (1992: 5).
(d) Miles and Huberman (1994: 308).

Clearly, all of these diagrams are both simplifications and idealizations of the research process. Real research is inevitably going to be a rather messier process. Nevertheless, Box 5 does suggest at least four common viewpoints:

- Research is often presented as a fixed, linear series of stages, with a clear start and end. You may think, at first glance, that this book is also organized in a linear fashion. Take a closer look! You will find extensive cross-referencing, and different kinds of text and presentation. The book has been designed to make the reader's use of it anything but linear.
- There are also somewhat more complicated presentations of this linear view, which allow for slightly different routes to be taken through the process at particular stages.
- Another common representation portrays research as a circular process, analogous to the more general process of learning. Much the same set of stages is included, and in much the same order, but there is an implication both that the process might be entered at a number of points, and that the experience of later stages might lead to a reinterpretation or revisiting of earlier stages.
- There are also variants to this approach, often associated with action research, which see the research process as cyclical or iterative. Here, the process is shown as going through a number of cycles, the effects of each one impacting upon the way in which successive cycles are approached.

Our preferred view builds on these representations, seeing the research process as a spiral (see Box 6). Seen from this perspective, research:

- is cyclical;
- can be entered at almost any point;
- is a never-ending process;
- will cause you to reconsider your practice;
- will return you to a different starting place.

The nature of the cycle varies between research designs. For example, in most quantitative research, decisions about analysis have to be taken before any fieldwork or data collection is undertaken. This is because the types of statistical techniques that are possible vary with the types of data collected. In the case of qualitative research, by contrast, data collection, sorting, analysis and reading can take place simultaneously.

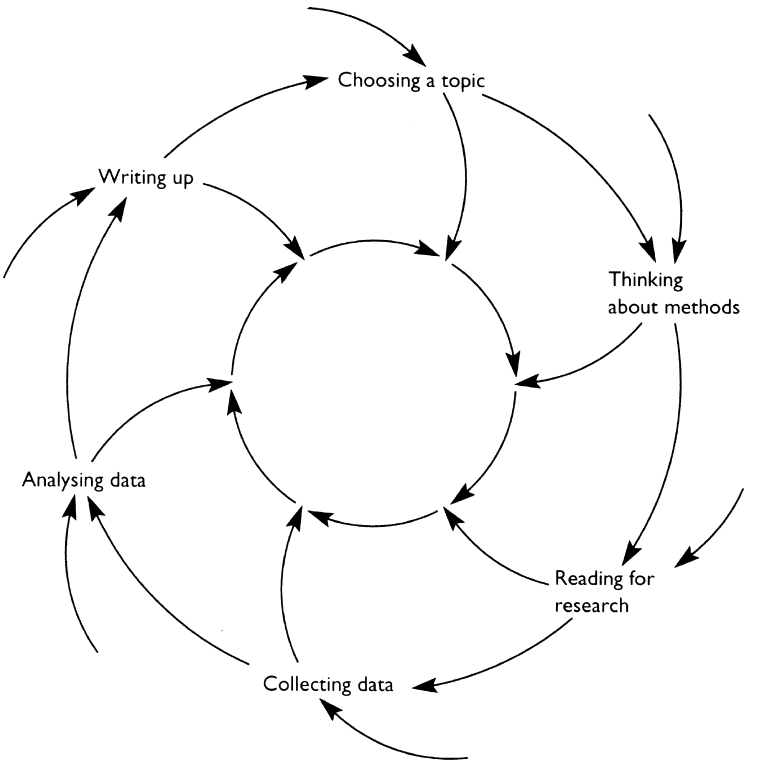
☐ Why research?

Understanding your motivation and self

So why are you undertaking, or interested in undertaking, research? Think about your reasons and try to complete Exercise 2.

Did you manage to think of six reasons? Did you think of more and run out of space? In our experience, people have at least three reasons for being

Box 6: The research spiral



Exercise 2: Reasons for undertaking research

List your reasons for your current or anticipated involvement in research. List as many as you can think of.

1
2
3
4
5
6

involved in research; so, if you could only manage one or two, perhaps you might think again.

Now compare the reasons which you identified with those expressed by experienced researchers. A selection of these is included in Box 7.

Box 7: Reasons for researching

1 Many of us study aspects of our autobiographies partially disguised as a 'detached' choice of an interesting problem.

(Acker 1981: 96)

2 Edwards quotes Acker and offers herself as an example. Her study of mature women students was not 'motivated by academic concern alone . . . While to some extent they statistically noted the stresses that I, along with others, had undergone, they told me nothing satisfactory about what had been going on in my life.'

(Edwards 1993: 12)

3 A few years ago I had some time off work to become a parent. Following this experience of leaving – and returning – I became excited about researching women's experiences of leaving management jobs. I wanted to tell the women's stories from their perspectives . . . This seemed like research I personally *had* to do.

(Marshall 1995: 23)

4 My interest in the topic of on-the-job training (OJT) stems from my personal experience. When I worked on vocational training for people from developing countries, and dealt with the comments and requirements from them, one of the most significant points was that there might be a difference between their and our (Japanese) concept of OJT.

(Suzuki 1995: 1)

5 Before university, and some of the way through it, I entertained grand but vague ideas about my future career all in the realm of changing the world dramatically! However, I gradually became reconciled to an academic future. The reconciliation was, of course, accompanied by a bloated sense of the potential for social change of the right kind of research, and in particular of my research project.

(Hammersley 1984: 42)

6 The research project had as its inception my own passage through that decade [the 1980s], and my own despair over the confused mess that white feminist women's response to charges of racism had collectively become by 1983–84 . . . as a white feminist, I knew that I had not previously known I was 'being racist' and that I had never set out to 'be racist'.

(Frankenberg 1993: 2–3)

As a researcher, you will find it useful to understand why you are involved in research. This will affect how you go about your research, and what you get out of it. If you are in doubt about your motivation, you might ask yourself the following questions:

- Where are you coming from?
- Whose side are you on?
- And where are you intending to get to?
- Do you want to change the world, or to change your world?
- Are you a pragmatist or an idealist?

You may see yourself as a detached researcher, separate from the subjects of your research, an objective bystander who is there to chronicle what happens, find the solutions and make appropriate recommendations. Or you might see yourself as totally enmeshed in the subject of your research, an active participant, committed to improving the circumstances of yourself and your colleagues through your work.

In practice, you are unlikely to be at either of these extremes, but they are useful stereotypes. They suggest the extent to which your motivation may affect your openness to certain approaches to research, and perhaps even influence the kinds of findings you come up with. It is important to you, as a researcher, to be aware of these possible influences. To other people, including those who read and judge the results of your research, these influences may be far more obvious.

Of course, it is possible that you could give no answer to Exercise 2. You may think of yourself as having no particular motivation for undertaking research. Perhaps you are doing it because your boss requires you to, or because it is an essential (but unwanted) part of a course you have signed up for. But even this suggests some motivation, if only to keep your boss happy or to try to get a particular qualification.

But what might you do if you really feel you have no motivation? After all, if you aren't motivated, or are not motivated very strongly, this will affect your drive to finish the research project successfully. The obvious answer to the researcher with no motivation is to get some quickly, or do something else! If the latter is not possible, you might seek motivation in one of the following ways:

- by changing your research project to something you are more interested in;
- by focusing on the skills you will develop through undertaking the research, rather than the output;
- by incorporating within the research some knowledge acquisition of relevance to you;
- by seeing the research project as part of a larger activity, which will have knock-on benefits for your work, your career, your social life or your life in general;
- by finding someone who will support you and push you through until you finish;
- by promising yourself a reward when it is successfully completed.

If you are still troubled by your lack of motivation, have a look at the section in Chapter 2 on **What to do if you can't think of a topic**.

Exercise 3: Originality in research

Complete the following sentence in no more than 20 words:

My research is original in . . .

☐ What is original?

For many research projects, particularly those carried out for a university degree, there is often a need for some kind or level of originality. This will typically be expressed in regulations or guidance in very general terms: 'an original project', 'an original contribution', 'evidence of original thinking'.

But what is originality? And where can you get some? If you are unsure, and it matters to you in your research, try Exercise 3.

Were you able to answer the question in a way which you found satisfactory?

In Box 8 you will find 15 definitions of originality, collected together by another author. Have a look at them, and see how they compare with your own answer.

Box 8: Fifteen definitions of originality

Here are 15 definitions of originality, as put together by Phillips and Pugh. The first six are derived from a previous author, Francis, while the other nine derive from interviews with Australian students, supervisors and examiners.

1 Setting down a major piece of new information in writing for the first time.
2 Continuing a previously original piece of work.
3 Carrying out original work designed by the supervisor.
4 Providing a single original technique, observation or result in an otherwise unoriginal but competent piece of research.
5 Having many original ideas, methods and interpretations all performed by others under the direction of the postgraduate.
6 Showing originality in testing someone else's idea.
7 Carrying out empirical work that hasn't been done before.
8 Making a synthesis that hasn't been made before.
9 Using already known material but with a new interpretation.
10 Trying out something in this country that has previously only been done in other countries.
11 Taking a particular technique and applying it in a new area.
12 Bringing new evidence to bear on an old issue.
13 Being cross-disciplinary and using different methodologies.
14 Looking at areas that people in the discipline haven't looked at before.
15 Adding to knowledge in a way that hasn't previously been done before.

Source: Phillips and Pugh (2000: 63–4); partly after Francis (1976).

As the definitions quoted indicate, it is possible to be original in terms of topic, approach or presentation. The element of originality in your own research is, realistically, likely to very small. Highly original research is very unusual, and you are probably setting your sights far too high if you try aiming for it.

The corollary of this is that your research is almost certainly original in some way, always providing, that is, that you are not slavishly copying someone else's earlier research. So be reassured. But if you are in doubt, check it out with those who will judge the originality of your research as early as possible. This advice also applies if you fear that you may be being too original for comfort. If you want to complete a useful piece of research in a particular context, it would not be sensible to, for example, present it in a way which is unacceptable.

See also the sub-section in Chapter 2 on **Regulations and expectations**.

☐ Truth, power and values

> The dominant tradition of the research-policy relationship in Britain sees research as providing objective, factual information which is handed over to policy-makers for their use . . . This approach therefore embodies a clear distinction between facts and values, and sees 'fact-finding' and 'making value judgements' as two separate activities which are pursued sequentially.
>
> (Finch 1986: 195)

> The meaning of subjectivity has had distinct power implications in the sense that it has been capable of dismissing many sorts of action and account which are not based on rationality, logic and objective procedure. These forms of action and account are . . . most likely to characterise the 'others' produced as different from white middle-class men: black and Third World people, working-class people and women.
>
> (Hollway 1989: 133)

> One memory that I would have sworn was 'the truth and nothing but the truth' concerned a wagon that my brother and I shared as a child. I remembered that we played with this toy only at my grandfather's house, that we shared it, that I would ride it and my brother would push me. Yet one facet of the memory was puzzling, I remembered always returning home with bruises or scratches from this toy. When I called my mother, she said there had never been any wagon, that we had shared a red wheelbarrow, that it had always been at my grandfather's house because there were sidewalks on that part of town.
>
> (hooks 1989: 157)

Many people coming to research for the first time have a tendency to think that they are in the business of establishing 'the truth' about a particular issue or

Exercise 4: The context for your research

Imagine you are doing research on experiences of training at work, whether within your own company or another.

Would your findings be different if you approached your interviewees through:

- the managing director?
- the personnel manager?
- the shop stewards' committee?
- the unemployed centre?

How might they differ? How might this affect your conclusions? What if you had to write a report of your conclusions for each of these audiences?

You can think about this as an exercise in finding out what is *safe* and what is *risky* in terms of expectations, theory, styles of writing etc.

subject. They want to find out 'the facts', or want to 'prove' (or perhaps disprove) a particular argument. They believe that they can be 'objective' in their research, and that others will sit up and take notice when they present their findings.

But research is not a wholly objective activity carried out by detached scientists. It is, as we have suggested, a social activity powerfully affected by the researcher's own motivations and values. It also takes place within a broader social context, within which politics and power relations influence what research is undertaken, how it is carried out and whether and how it is reported and acted upon. If you don't believe this, try Exercise 4.

As Exercise 4 suggests, politics, power and values may be important considerations for your research as well, especially if you carry it out within your own or another organization. Your contacts will affect your access to the subjects of your research, may require you to submit your research proposals for scrutiny, and to revise them, and may exercise some veto over what you can actually write up or publish. If you are unlucky, misread the organizational politics or irritate the researched, you may find cooperation withdrawn part way through your project.

So it is important to understand not just where you are coming from, but also where those you are seeking to research are coming from. Preparatory time spent in learning about this is almost always well spent, as well as being valuable contextual research in its own right.

Rather than expecting to 'find the truth', it is probably better to think of research work in terms of words like rigour, reliability, professionalism and honesty. No one research project can realistically aspire to do more than advance our understanding in some way. Most researchers have to compromise their practices to fit into the time and other resources available for their studies. Doing research is, therefore, about producing something which is 'good enough'.

This does not mean, of course, that such research cannot be pursued with drive, passion and commitment; though it might also be pursued in a more detached

fashion. What is important to us as researchers is that research should be as open and transparent as possible in terms of its intentions, methodology, analysis and findings.

Different audiences and rules

As a researcher, you should also be aware of who you are researching and writing for, and the different rules and expectations which these people may have. You may be researching for a university degree, in which case you will need to produce a dissertation or thesis that will be assessed by academic criteria. Or you may be carrying out a research project for your employer, who will expect a concise report emphasizing the implications of your findings and recommending action. Or you may be balancing both of these roles. While the processes may be broadly similar, the outputs are likely to look very different.

For more advice here, look at the section in Chapter 8 on **Whom am I writing for?**

Your audience may also include those you are researching, whether at work or within a community organization. If the latter, your approach may be to work from the bottom up, gaining consensus and support from all involved throughout the process; and the research may be as much about the change and development engendered in your audience as about any written output.

The important theme which runs through this discussion is your need, as a researcher, to be aware of the context in which you are researching. This manifests itself in rules, whether written or unwritten. You need to be aware of these rules, and to follow them, if you wish to succeed. You cannot hope just to muddle along and not run into any problems.

Hint: Open a file on 'Regulations and Expectations'. Include copies of all the written regulations that apply to your research project, and add notes on any unwritten expectations which you may find out about during your work.

☐ How to use this book

The organization of the book

If you have already leafed through this book, or looked at the contents page, you will probably have noticed that it is organized in the kind of sequential, linear

fashion which we criticized earlier in this chapter when discussing different representations of the research process. It is difficult to organize a book in any other way.

Thus, there are nine chapters, as follows:

Chapter 1: **Thinking about research**, which considers the nature and context of research.
Chapter 2: **Getting started**, which discusses how to focus your research project.
Chapter 3: **Thinking about methods**, which examines the most common approaches and techniques used in research.
Chapter 4: **Reading for research**, which discusses how and what to read, and reading as a source of data.
Chapter 5: **Managing your project**, which deals with the planning and progressing of the work.
Chapter 6: **Collecting data**, which considers the techniques and issues involved in data collection.
Chapter 7: **Analysing data**, which examines how you can record, analyse and interpret different kinds of data.
Chapter 8: **Writing up**, which deals with the organization and drafting of your report or thesis.
Chapter 9: **Finishing off**, which looks at how to complete your project and what you might do afterwards.

The elements of the book

In looking at this book, you will probably also have noticed that it does not consist of straightforward text, but is composed of a number of elements. These are:

- the *text* itself, which is designed to offer guidance and lead you through the book;
- a series of 130 *boxes*, which provide summaries, illustrations, examples and lists relevant to the issues discussed in the text;
- a range of 61 *exercises*, which are designed to get you thinking about some of the issues raised in the context of your own research plans and experiences;
- dozens of *quotations*, either in the text or in boxes, exemplifying and illustrating both the experience of other researchers and their insights into researching;
- at the end of each chapter, except this first one, an up-to-date and extensive *annotated bibliography* of relevant books on the topics covered, with an indication of their contents;
- at the end of the book, a complete list of the *references* mentioned in the text;
- within the text, *cross-references* to guide you between parts of the book;
- occasional *hints*, tips and health warnings, designed to keep you on track.

We have adopted this varied presentational form to help you, the reader, to engage with what are rich and complex issues and debates, but without using

complicated language. It is also intended to encourage different ways of using the book and its contents.

As social scientists trained in three different disciplines – anthropology, sociology and geography respectively – and now working in a continuing education department, we have tried to include examples and illustrations from across the range of the social sciences. You will, however, find traces of our biographies throughout the book.

How to find your way through the book

There are many possible ways of using this book. The approach you adopt will depend upon your experience and preferences, the other support you are receiving and the kind of research project you are engaged in. You may, for example, already be well into your research by the time you pick up this book, and be looking for guidance on specific issues; or you may not have started yet, and be scouting around for general advice.

Among the different ways in which you might use this book we can identify the following:

- You could start at the beginning and read through to the end. Though this is commonly perceived as the normal way to read a book, and to conduct research, we do not imagine that many of you will be doing this.
- You could start by reading Chapter 4, **Reading for research**, and then work both backwards and forwards from there.
- You could scan the contents list, read this introductory chapter, flick through the other chapters and sections, and then focus your attention on the pages that are of current interest to you.
- You could use the index to find references to topics that concern you.
- You could use the book as a basis for discussion, dialogue or exchange of ideas between yourself and others engaged in similar research projects.
- If you are involved in teaching or supervising those undertaking research, you might use the book as a source for exercises or ideas.

These are just some of the possibilities. We do not wish to restrict the ways in which you might use the book. Indeed, we would see your use of it as in many ways paralleling the research process itself: starting at any point, jumping from place to place, doing several things simultaneously, returning with renewed understanding to places you have already visited. To help you in this process, we have built in lots of cross-references between the different sections.

We would welcome your ideas on and responses to the book. If you would like to make a suggestion, please contact the authors through the publishers.

☐ What is different about this edition?

In producing this second edition, we have drawn on the many helpful suggestions made by readers, and our own experiences, since the first edition was published in 1996. In particular, we have:

- thoroughly updated the bibliographies and references, to reflect the recent growth in writing and publishing on research methods and processes;
- added new examples and illustrations;
- added some additional textual material, including new sections on **Which method is best?** in Chapter 3, **Using the Internet** in Chapter 4 and **Computer-based analysis** in Chapter 7;
- checked, revised and amended the text, boxes and exercises.

We hope that you find this edition even more useful than the first one!

☐ Summary

Having read this chapter, you should:

- have some understanding of the variety of activities which may be considered as being 'research';
- appreciate that the research process is not straightforward, predictable or linear;
- have a clearer idea of your own motivations for engaging in research, and of the context for your research;
- be more confident about your own ability to carry out a small-scale research project.

☐ Further reading

As this is the first chapter in the book, and designed to be introductory, no specific suggestions for further reading will be given here. If you are keen to read more at this stage, however, you might look at the suggestions for the next chapter, or any of the other chapters. In many cases, of course, the books referred to could have been listed in more than one chapter, and contain sections which are relevant to a number of chapters.

We have designed the annotated bibliographies, included in the further reading sections at the end of the following eight chapters, to enable you to:

- browse through and identify texts which are likely to be of particular interest to you;
- identify books which focus on social science research in general, and those which are specific to particular disciplines or subject areas;
- quickly access deeper, more detailed or more theoretical treatments of the social research process.

The bibliographies have been restricted to books.

You will find that the bibliographies vary considerably in length, reflecting the variability in the available literature. Thus, the lists for Chapters 3, 6 and 7, which deal with research methods, and the collection and analysis of data, are substantial; while those for Chapters 2, 4, 5 and 8, which cover starting research, reading, managing your project and writing up, are more limited. The further reading for the final chapter, Chapter 9, is also lengthy, but focuses on more theoretical treatments for those who want to read further into the research literature.