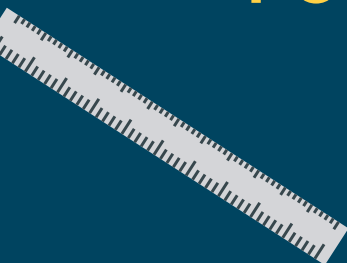




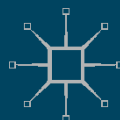
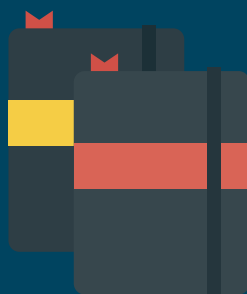
**PALGRAVE STUDIES IN
EDUCATION RESEARCH METHODS**

Edited by Bobby Harreveld, Mike Danaher,
Celeste Lawson, Bruce Allan Knight and Gillian Busch

CONSTRUCTING METHODOLOGY FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH



Researching Education
and Social Practices



Palgrave Studies in Education Research Methods

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CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
	Bobby Harreveld, Mike Danaher, Celeste Lawson, Bruce Allen Knight, and Gillian Busch	
2	A Non-binary Methodological Manoeuvre: Expert Quantitative and Novice Qualitative Researcher	15
	Gemma Mann	
3	Dipping Qualitative Toes into a Quantitative Worldview: Methodological Manoeuvres in a Multicultural Context	31
	Cynthia Cowling and Celeste Lawson	
4	Navigating the Path Between Positivism and Interpretivism for the Technology Academic Completing Education Research	45
	Michael A. Cowling	
5	A Bricoleur Approach to Navigating the Methodological Maze	59
	Reyna Zipf	

- 6 Manoeuvring Through the Maze of Methodology:
Constructing the Research-Ready Embodied
RHD Student** 73
Teresa Moore
- 7 Elements of a Fusionist Ontology: Paradigmatic
Choices in Understanding the Reasons
for Career Change** 89
Rickie Fisher
- 8 We Cannot Do This Work Without Being
Who We Are: Researching and Experiencing
Academic Selves** 105
Sarah Loch and Alison L. Black
- 9 Show and Tell: A Practice-Led Methodological
Solution for Researchers in Creative Writing** 123
Leanne Dodd
- 10 Articulating the Fact Behind the Fiction:
Narrative Inquiry as a Research Methodology
for Historical Novelists** 139
Alison Owens
- 11 On Manoeuvre: Navigating Practice-Led
Methodology in a Creative Writing PhD
for the First Time** 155
Mike Danaher and Margaret Jamieson
- 12 Methodological and Other Research Strategies
to Manoeuvre from Single to Multi-
and Interdisciplinary Project Partnerships** 171
Donna Lee Brien and Margaret McAllister

13	Contested Concepts: Negotiating Debates About Qualitative Research Methods Such as Grounded Theory and Autoethnography	187
	Steven Pace	
14	Discursive Manoeuvring in the Borderlands of Career Transition: From Trade to Teacher	201
	Bill Blayney and Bobby Harreveld	
15	Understanding and Influencing Research with Children	219
	Alison L. Black and Gillian Busch	
16	From Fledgling Manoeuvres to Methodological Confidence: Conversations Between a Doctoral Student and Supervisor on Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis to Explore the Everyday Worlds of Children and Families	237
	Gillian Busch and Susan Danby	
17	Reimagining Rooms for Methodological Manoeuvres: Distilled Dilemmas, Proposed Principles and Synthesised Strategies in Research Education and Social Practices Qualitatively	253
	P. A. Danaher	
	Index	269

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LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 5.1	Graphic of research strategy	64
Fig. 8.1	Our string of emails has become a cat's cradle for our work in academe (Ali Black, Digital artwork, 2015)	107
Fig. 8.2	How important is it to take time to sit with our views about what speaks meaningfully to us, and then to connect with another and be moved (transformed) by the sharing back and forth? (Ali Black, Personal photo 2011, Using image to connect with what reterritorialising might involve)	110
Fig. 8.3	Writing with you Sarah connects me to something deep, to myself, it is like communion (Ali Black, Personal photograph, digitally modified 2015)	113
Fig. 8.4	A PhD journey pockmarked by failure? (Ali Black, Digital artwork, based on Personal photo offered by Sarah Loch, 2015)	116
Fig. 8.5	What is the cost (to our research, to expanding our understanding of the world, to our own sense of wholeness) if we compartmentalise life and work to veil the full dimensions of our own humanity? (Ali Black, Digital artwork, 2015)	117
Fig. 8.6	My four-year-old son loves 'doing science' and he's made a brain out of air. He blows bubbles using a straw in a bowl of water and his creation begins to overflow. What do I see? What else should I be doing with my time? The intermesh of personal/professional. (Sarah Loch, Personal photo, 2015)	119
Fig. 8.7	What is at the heart of our research if we are not there? A call to live beyond the divided academic life (Ali Black, Digital artwork based on Personal photo offered by Sarah Loch, 2015)	120
Fig. 9.1	'Show and tell' methodology design	133

Fig. 11.1	Conceptualization of their collective manoeuvre	157
Fig. 12.1	Flexible collaborative approaches	175
Fig. 14.1	From themes to discourses	212
Fig. 15.1	We can photograph how children have used materials, but if children are missing from the images we take, can we see what matters to them? Can we see and understand the meaning they are making? What is visible/invisible?	227
Fig. 15.2	This Queensland Alumina Limited (QAL) industry staff newsletter includes photos of children and transcripts of their conversations. Staff and others can see what children know and understand	230
Fig. 15.3	The Art Gallery brochure that accompanies the exhibition has images of children, their play and creations	231
Fig. 15.4	This child attended the art gallery exhibition and children's installation. She was photographed by the artist who wanted to show how children were responding to her work and exploring materials and ideas	232
Fig. 15.5	Is there reduced understanding if children are not visible? What happens when children are removed or anonymised?	233
Fig. 16.1	Supervisory written feedback	249

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1	Examples of different types of research	48
Table 13.1	Grounded theory as a contested concept	189
Table 13.2	Autoethnography as a contested concept	195
Table 14.1	Themes of career transition from trade to teacher	210
Table 16.1	Example of a transcript	246
Table 17.1	Identified issues and methodological responses in the chapter authors' methodological manoeuvrings	257
Table 17.2	Distilled dilemmas, proposed principles, synthesised strategies and indicative examples in this book	262

Introduction

*Bobby Harreveld, Mike Danaher, Celeste Lawson,
Bruce Allen Knight, and Gillian Busch*

When researching education and social practices, methodological considerations are no longer—if indeed they ever were—linear, seamless, or even consistently coherent. Increasingly, the markers of difference among research methodologies in the social sciences are challenged, ambushed even, as fit-for-purpose methodological relationships are constructed. This edited collection echoes such developmental trajectories from the oppositional stances of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods to the emerging nimble, fluid, recursive, and iterative paradigms evocative of the messiness characterising the web of independent problems that emerge as research progresses (Ackoff, 1979; Law, 2004; Hester & Adams, 2014).

Through an eclectic mix of research cases where methodological approaches are manoeuvred to fit the research context, this book engages with the confusion and difficulties faced by doctoral candidates and early career researchers. The authors reject the positivism–interpretivism binary

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when constructing the appropriate methodological framework for the project. They have realised the constraints that some research methods imply—the binary of quantitative versus qualitative enquiry. Conceptually, they provide a differentiation from previous work in the area of postgraduate and early career research education for capacity building (Denholm & Evans, 2009; Midgley, Tyler, Danaher, & Mander, 2011; Danaher et al., 2014). Yet at the same time, they acknowledge an intellectual debt to these works while incorporating its unique conceptual meshing of research work in tension with a virtual plethora of orientations towards designing and undertaking research.

Qualitative research is a broad church encompassing a bewildering profusion of similarity with elusive differences often requiring years of immersion to understanding its scholarship. Those seeking this understanding, bring with them ways of knowing their worlds that both challenge and are challenged by the fundamental tenets of qualitative research. In this process, non-linearity is foregrounded and situated in the interdisciplinary spaces of qualitative research. Most significantly, it highlights researchers' experiences manoeuvring through the '-ologies' of a qualitative research paradigm, namely, its ontology (nature of its reality), epistemology (the relationship between the researcher and what can be known about that reality), axiology (values underpinning the ethical stance of the research process), and its methodology (how to go about investigating what can/could be known) (Punch, 2014). This focus on methodological manoeuvring is fundamental to the construction of a qualitatively framed research worldview or paradigm that engages with the 'why' behind the methods of data collection and analysis to encapsulate the actuality of experiences.

When constructing methodology for qualitative research, an initial challenge for novice qualitative researchers and experienced research-supervisors in education, creative and performing arts, the humanities, and social sciences more broadly is to assimilate these high-end philosophical notions of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. This challenge may be met by negotiating methodological allegiances while developing research expertise investigating and interpreting critically the contextualised social practices of various projects (Wray & Wallace, 2011). Yet too often, such work invariably begins from the standpoint of naïve novices uncontaminated by previous knowledge of and experience with singular or multiple research methodological frameworks. This collection challenges such a fallacy. It demonstrates that those disciplines espousing singularly quantitative approaches may have not had cause to question the philosophical

basis for the methods employed to construct knowledge until engaging in educational and other social world problems where researchers reflexively engage with ‘the baggage you take in, the biases and interests and areas of ignorance’ (Richards, 2005, p. 42) as they are entrenched in data analysis, (re)interpretation, and elucidation of data.

Constructing a research design requires deliberation of qualitative versus quantitative approaches and the ubiquitous mixed-methods frameworks for investigations in both the social sciences and professional fields in which applied research is practised (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Anfara & Mertz, 2015). However, it is often when ethical considerations are encountered and subsequently challenge social scientists at all stages of their research careers, that the messiness of methodology is encountered. The latest fourth edition of Ranjit Kumar’s (2014) *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners* is an example of such thinking. Nevertheless, as Marshall and Rossman (2011) illustrate in their work on *Designing Qualitative Research*, research processes are more likely to be frustratingly fluid and intriguingly iterative, as well as recursively rigorous.

CONSTRUCTING QUALITATIVE RESEARCHERS

Over the last decade, there has been considerable concern over the fate of social science research workforce development in the context of commodified national and international higher education policy agenda (Edwards, 2010; Sursock & Smidt, 2010; Bexley, James, & Arkoudis, 2011). At the same time, people are coming into the research field seeking ways of investigating seemingly insurmountable social issues, illogical politically induced changes impacting decision-making in local/global policy, professional practices, and people’s everyday lives (Flick, 2011). Career trajectories reflect this process as novice researchers bring to their investigations a rich diversity of ages, dispositions, cultures, linguistic capabilities, and lived experiences.

Thus, this book gives voice to these twenty-first-century researchers who choose to engage with societal, political, legal, and economic tentacles of power inscribed in everyday life; and with forces that name and control what counts as research and the work of researchers (Lee, Goodyear, Seddon, & Renshaw, 2011). This is necessary because reconceptualising the logic and effect of qualitative research work undertaken by novice and experienced researchers is as much a political project as it is an educational

project. As an exercise of power in a democratic society, it is anything but self-evident and more than worthy of considerable analytical critique (Lee et al., 2011; Seddon et al., 2013).

Constructing methodology for qualitative research is a process of strategic risk taking for researchers (Harreveld, 2004). Articulating the messiness of methodology requires the bricoleur qualitative researcher to articulate through explicit engagements with assumptions about investigative worlds, the topics worthy of consideration and the tactics of enquiry into the topics from within those worlds (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Zipf, Chap. 5). ‘Bricoleurs allow for dynamics and contexts to dictate which questions get asked, which methods to employ and which interpretive perspectives to use’ (Rogers, 2012, p. 6). Accordingly, the collection has been guided by a grand tour question (Leech, 2002): How do qualitative researchers manoeuvre through the maze of methodology to make meaning for their research projects?

Educators and social scientists engage with a range of methodological allegiances and contestations when being and becoming researchers. Our approach is qualitative in its methodological orientation and ethnographic in its execution (Fetterman, 2010; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The text has been developed iteratively through a research symposium followed by a series of writing workshops with inbuilt cycles of reflective collegial critique complemented with a double blind peer-review process for each chapter and the text as a whole.

The possibilities of methodological choice explored in this collection are ontologically audacious yet epistemologically cautious. While epistemology may require an explicit phenomenon of enquiry from within a particular societal framing, ontological perspectives are more wide-ranging in their theoretical construction. This process engenders confidence in the bricolage approach (Rogers, 2012) when seeking synergies between the investigative technique/s and the construction of ontological facets of the research context.

CONSTRUCTING METHODOLOGY

The book flows structurally through two iterative processes when constructing methodology for qualitative research. First, there is the positioning of the researcher within the process; and second, that of manoeuvring self within the practices of qualitative research across necessarily selective social science disciplines in education, arts, and humanities. Constructing

self methodologically investigates the individuals in qualitative research as they bring their worldviews to the project that may be challenged and/or confirmed through consideration of its ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions that influence and are influenced by methodological allegiances and alliances. These chapters reflect those challenges, their contestations, and resolutions. The practices of manoeuvring are concerned with the ways in which qualitative researchers construct methodological frameworks that mesh with and respond to their work as practitioner-researchers.

Gemma Mann (Chap. 2) presents an autobiographical account of her journey from experienced quantitative to novice qualitative researcher. When moving into the qualitative realm of education research, Gemma found that she could not leave behind totally her quantitative background constructed during PhD studies in physics. She is both an expert and a novice researcher, utilising knowledge of quantitative methods while constructing a qualitative framework for her project investigating quantitative literacy. Further, Gemma is both student and teacher as the non-binary, non-linear nature and complex maze of her journey unfolds—a journey in which seemingly incongruent ideas and experiences overlap. Her chapter illustrates the skills of that previous methodological experience brought into—translated into—her current work as an education researcher.

Research in medical imaging, particularly diagnostic radiography, has traditionally been quantitative, reflecting its clinical scientific focus. This is the world in which Cynthia Cowling is undertaking an ethnographic study of the sociological practice of radiography, including a comparison of its workplace practices in a number of different countries. In terms of the radiography profession, the authors of Chap. 3 represent both insider (Cynthia) and outsider status (Celeste Lawson). Methodologically, Celeste is the experienced qualitative researcher as Cynthia reprises previous knowledge and experiences with qualitative research from earlier studies in anthropology while coming to terms with the challenges of manoeuvring through both occupational and cultural differences in the construction of radiography work. This chapter provides a voice to the validity of ethnography for research in a discipline usually yoked to the quantitative framing of what counts as knowledge and its construction.

Michael Cowling is a researcher in the field of information and communication technology (ICT), who comes from a background steeped in experimentation and is making a methodological shift to contribute to qualitative research discussions in learning and teaching. Building on the

work of Chinn, Buckland, and Samarapungavan (2011), who argue that epistemological perceptions must be broadened to help with cognition, his chapter (Chap. 4) fractures the epistemology learned as an academic in this field. He seeks to explain this positivist epistemology as encountered when completing PhD research in ICT, a discipline in which the ‘scientific method’ was espoused. The process through which Michael came from technology research to navigate an epistemological shift for learning and teaching research whilst still being involved with the ICT discipline forms the core of this chapter.

Taking a bricoleur approach to navigating self through the methodological maze enables Reyna Zipf to take a nebulous concept, creativity, and research it in a complex setting, secondary school science lessons (Chap. 5). She interrogates her novice researchers’ methodological journey to arrive at a methodological approach underpinned by a *bricoleur* stance. This is presented through four milestones: entering the maze; inside the maze; emerging from the maze; and arriving at your methodological destination. Reyna positions ‘entering the methodological maze’ as risky business that involves overcoming fear of failure. Inside the maze requires methodological navigation skills, and emerging from the maze necessitates negotiation with self. Arriving at a methodological destination was facilitated by a researcher-as-*bricoleur* stance. Such a stance enabled manoeuvring between and through pathways in the methodological maze; it was the tool by which holes in the maze hedge were made allowing hitherto separate pathways to be joined.

Teaching research methodologies is both a joy and a challenge for Teresa Moore (Chap. 6). She has found that big words such as epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology can paralyse the novice researcher who just wants to do the project, run some numbers and see their findings change the world. Introducing students to the conceptual and abstract nature of qualitative methodologies broadens the landscape for both novice and experienced researchers to think differently and become intimately part of their research project. Doctoral students are not an empty vessel requiring facts, procedures, and methods, but rather bring with them personal experiences, history, skills, and knowledge. In this chapter, Teresa explores how manoeuvring Research Higher Degree students through the maze of methodology in a specific research methodology course offers students the opportunity to expand their own conceptualisation of meaning and negotiation of methodology when designing and interpreting doctoral research, along with examining her continuing growth as a researcher, supervisor, and educator.

In Chap. 7, Rickie Fisher proposes a methodology for a fusionist ontology within a grounded theory study to understand the reasons for people's career changes to become secondary school teachers. For the career change participants in his study, similar to himself as a novice researcher, becoming secondary school teachers could be explained in terms related to whatever they had previously been; that is, their previous career engagements, experiences, and prior states. The fusion between what may have been and what may become is dynamic. As Zaborskis (2011) explains, 'becoming implies growth and change... we are always "becoming", what the self was is lost, but that self is now something new that it was not before' (p. 1). Like the career change participants, the novice researcher manoeuvres through the maze of methodology in their journey to define their past and present social realities. The fusionist ontology provides a purposeful basis for his interpretive constructivist grounded theory—becoming—that encapsulates the Janus-like past and future contiguity of career change; and also that of becoming a researcher.

Ali Black and Sarah Loch are two academics who cannot do their work as qualitative researchers without being who they are (Chap. 8). Through the use of photography and poetry, they share their vulnerability as qualitative researchers struggling with ways to speak their lives in the academy. Ali and Sarah attend to the place of the personal in researching qualitatively. Many academics feel significant pressure to produce research, receiving dogged messages about what counts as research, the impact of research, and preferred audiences and outcomes. Their chapter explores the manoeuvring we do, the manoeuvring upon us to be producers of research, but also their deliberate and conscious appreciation that they cannot do this work without being who they are. Moreover, who they are cannot be separated from how they are being produced as researchers through their methodologies, or from the methodological choices they make. This chapter's honest and frank approach encourages others to consider the potency for 'making meaning' with research.

Leanne Dodd's chapter explores the challenge encountered when transitioning from the role of creative practitioner to that of practice-led researcher of creative practice. She invokes the lessons of stylish academic writing espoused by Sword (2012, p. 99): 'show, don't tell'. A key challenge for the practitioner engaged in this progression, whose aim is often to enrich their creative work through research, is that the language of theory is at odds with creative production. This is a dichotomy that Chap. 9 sets out to resolve. Professional training equips the creative writing practitio-

ner such as Leanne with the skill to compose narrative based on the premise of ‘Show, don’t Tell’; however, a conflicting academic writing style, where the main purpose is to ‘tell’, is mandated for the exegetical component of her creative writing thesis. Through an evidence-based case study of strategic risk taking, Leanne establishes a ‘Show and Tell’ methodology approach for creative writing practitioners and for the academy. She offers a methodology to produce synergised research outcomes for practice-led researchers where the importance of the embedded new knowledge in the creative component is reflected in the exegetical component.

Writers of historical fiction may not be academics, yet research is an important task they undertake to build an authentic and credible portrait of an imagined past. Alison Owens is writing a historical novel and in Chap. 10, she articulates the role that narrative inquiry plays as her research methodology. Alison notes that the ‘bricoleur as bower-bird’ (Webb & Brien, 2011) or ‘magpie’ (Pullinger, 2008) approach to research are perhaps apt metaphors for her work that utilises a variety of data in the crafting of her story. In seeking to describe, explain, and justify the research framework for historical novelists such as herself, she argues the efficacy of narrative inquiry as a qualitative approach for storytellers such as herself who are exploring the creative writing process itself in the exegesis accompanying a creative writing artefact. She concludes that framing historical fiction writing as creative practice-led research deploying narrative inquiry is a methodological choice enhancing understanding of how the past informs the present and the future while also enabling the creativity through with writers engage fact to generate fiction.

Margaret Jamieson is writing a historical romance novel as part of her PhD. Both she and her supervisor, Mike Danaher, are crafting a practice-led methodology for the accompanying exegesis. In Chap. 11, they analyse the specific stages of this practice-led methodology (visioning, planning, journeying, reflecting, and evaluating). Central to this chapter is the relationship between the novice researcher doctoral candidate and the supervisor who is both novice (to the methodology) and expert (in supervision). Their insights disrupt the binaries of novice-expert, student-supervisor. Both are learning the intricacies of practice-led research methodologically. Both are teaching—Margaret is teaching Mike about her historical romance writing process; and Mike is teaching Margaret to become a researcher. The power of the reflective journal in this process emerges as pivotal to practice-led research, linking the creative writing artefact to the exegesis.

In Chap. 12, Donna Brien and Margaret McAllister explore what happens when two joint research projects progress from a multi-disciplinary to an interdisciplinary approach to qualitative research. Working together across nursing and creative writing disciplines revealed methodological choices to be made at all stages of the research process including data collection, interpretation, and eventual dissemination. The methodological challenges and opportunities of moving from single disciplinary to multi- to eventual interdisciplinary research form the core of this chapter. Donna and Margaret are finding that this research approach is opening up wider opportunities than may have perhaps been possible if each had stayed researching within her own disciplinary tribe. Their findings suggest a significant contribution to twenty-first-century doctoral education and early career researcher education.

Steven Pace establishes a dialogue between two contested concepts in qualitative research methods, grounded theory, and autoethnography (Chap. 13). He engages with one specific everyday consideration of early career and novice researchers: adopting a research method, especially when it is alternative, contested, and highly and critically negotiated. Steven concisely describes and analyses the negotiations around and development of grounded theory. The negotiations around autoethnography, especially its ontology, epistemology, and axiology, are challenging indeed. Through this debate, we learn that there is no easily won clarity and confidence in making methodological choices. Misconceptions abound. Well-meaning supervisors with understanding limited to their own experience may caution against such exploration, such as other readings of theory, ontology, and epistemology, in favour of their own known methodology as a 'safer' option.

When researching qualitatively the borderlands of transition from trade-qualified workers to secondary school teachers, methodological options abound. In Chap. 14, Bill Blayney and Bobby Harreveld explore three interrelated discourses of methodological manoeuvring: conceptual, methodological, and analytical. Discourses of transition constitute the conceptual manoeuvre as the study is framed in terms of the discourses of research participants who have lived in-between the different worlds of trade work, university study, and teaching work. Pragmatically and strategically, case study is proposed as both methodology and method because of its ontological and epistemological perspectives consistent with the study's aim and research questions and congruent with their values and beliefs as to what counts as research, how it is conducted and reported. Analytically,

four phases of case construction are deployed: establishing the case data set; creating emergent themes through linguistic features identified in interview transcripts; then composing a narrative representation of participants' lived experiences through career transition; and finally undertaking a cross-case analysis that developed the themes into borderland discourses that explain the tensions and contradictions through which participants develop new identities as teachers.

Researching 'with' children is a critical topic. Ali Black and Gillian Busch explore the methodological minefields, motivations, and ethical concerns encountered in this process (Chap. 15). From the rich literature published on researching with children, Ali and Gillian consider how researcher values and ethical commitments position children, determine their visibility, and influence wider cultures of listening to children. They use narratively assembled research encounters and dilemmas related to research infrastructures (e.g. university ethics committees) to explore the challenges of attending to and negotiating ethical territories and relations of power including their own positionality and partiality as researchers. Their chapter engages readers in a dialogue in which not only scholarly sources, but also their verbal and visual depictions of reflexivity are crafted into the narrative. For Ali and Gillian, knowledge production is a joint venture with children, adult participants, and themselves as researchers.

Delving further into the context of researching the everyday worlds of children and families, Gillian Busch and Susan Danby explore the use of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis in Chap. 16. As with Chap. 4, the supervisor–student, or advisor–advisee, relationship is foregrounded as Gillian meets many challenges as a (then) fledgling researcher grappling with ethnomethodology per se, and subsequently when grappling with the intricacies of analysis of digitally recorded videos of family meal times. This reflective text highlights these challenges through a storytelling device whereby each author presents her reflective account of a series of manoeuvres encountered throughout the doctoral journey. Here the conventional guidance from the experienced supervisor (Susan) is unpacked in terms of the methodology of ethnomethodology and its suitability for Gillian's proposed study. Encountering transcription as central to analysis of conversations is both an interpretative and representational process that constituted yet further complex challenges, especially when it involved wider sharing of data with others in a postgraduate student research community, conferences, and intensive workshops. From trepi-

dation about this public sharing, Gillian finds instead solace and support. Susan's storytelling throughout their relationship is a tool for building technical competency and engendering confidence throughout the ebbs and flows of the research journey.

In our capstone chapter, Patrick Danaher responds to the dilemmas, principles, and strategies proposed when constructing methodology for qualitative research. He does so through reimagining two logically distinct but interrelated and inter-reliant phenomena that he terms the rooms for methodological manoeuvres. First, qualitative researchers inhabit and embody prospective spaces (rooms) for constructing and assembling theoretical and methodological resources for designing and enacting their projects. Second, there is also a retrospective space through which and in which researchers may reflect, regroup, and even change direction as their project proceeds. This retrospective space is the room to manoeuvre methodologically and theoretically. These spaces are creatively constructed through contemporary and emerging methodologies as well as the lived experiences of novice and experienced researchers deploying such methodologies.

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This book is the product of inductive analysis. It unpacks the seeming certainties of methodological decision-making in qualitative research to expose webs of vulnerability that illustrate the deceptive strength of reflexive social researchers' fragility. Such vulnerability takes courage and confidence to articulate. In so doing, it provides a meta-narrative of these researchers' transitional learning journeys. The chapters that follow will resonate with readers differentially as they empathise with some more than others. Yet we hope that you will be able to read yourselves in to the tensions and tangles of qualitative research when confronted with the difficulty of establishing facets of educational and social 'truth' while achieving a best-fit methodological choice to suit your studies' ontological contexts.

It is timely perhaps to revivify the pioneering spirit of qualitative research, its sense of mission, and its innovativeness (Ackoff, 1979). In our book, the seeming clarity and precision in the discourses of methodology are questioned. You will find in the chapters that follow deliberate engagements with the messiness of methodology and the methods chosen to enact it. As John Law (2004) has argued, methodological imagination, intuition, and innovation is still needed because the politics of undertak-