Part I
Before You Start

Before leaping into an enquiry or project, you need to have an idea about what you are letting yourself in for. Many real world studies take place on someone else's territory. False moves can inoculate a firm, school or other institution against future involvements, not only with you, but with other potential researchers – and, possibly, against the whole idea of systematic enquiry as an approach to dealing with problems or understanding situations. Other commonly occurring real world studies may involve you researching some aspect of the situation in which you work or are already involved in some way. Here you will have to live with any mess you make.

This is not to argue that everything has to be cut and dried before you start. Any proposals you make for carrying out the enquiry will benefit from some real world exposure by discussing your suggestions with 'stakeholders' – those likely to have an interest in the research, either because it might involve them in some additional efforts or trouble, or because they might be affected by the findings. Indeed, there is much to be said in favour of collaborative ventures, where such persons have a substantial say in the enterprise.

Keeping a Research Diary

It is good practice to keep a full and complete record of all the various activities with which you are involved in connection with the project. Sometimes this is limited to the stages when you are collecting data. Then it is certainly invaluable as it helps to keep in one place details of appointments and meetings, what data were actually collected, where, when, etc. However, there is much to be said for starting the diary on day one of planning the project. It can take a variety of formats, but an obvious one is an actual diary, with at

least a page for each day. Keeping it on your computer is attractive, providing you have good computer housekeeping habits.

The kinds of things which might be entered include:

- notes of things you have read; references (get into good habits of taking full references, the effort now will save you pain later when you are trying to chase up missing details);
- any thoughts relevant to the project; particularly when you decide to modify earlier intentions; reminders to yourself of things to be done; people to be chased up, etc.;
- appointments made, and kept, together with an aide-memoire of where you have put anything arising from the meeting (one strategy is to include everything here in the diary);
- stocktaking of where you are in relation to each phase of the project; short interim reports of progress, problems and worries; suggestions for what might be done.

The diary can be very valuable when you get to the stage of putting together the findings of the research and writing any reports. In particular, with some styles of flexible design research where it is expected that you produce a *reflexive report* (an account reflecting on the process of the research), the research diary is indispensable.

1
Real World Enquiry

This chapter:

- explains what is meant by focusing on the real world;
- introduces possible approaches to real world enquiry and makes the case for your knowing something about methodology (the fundamental principles on which the methods of social research are based) as well as the methods themselves;
- stresses that much real world research is concerned with evaluating some intervention, innovation, service or program, and that
- there is often a concern for action or change;
- reveals the author's assumptions about what you are looking for in using this book; and
- concludes by attempting to give something of the flavour of real world enquiry.

Focusing on the Real World

The purpose of this book is to give assistance, ideas and confidence to those who, for good and honourable reasons, wish to carry out some kind of investigation involving people in 'real life' situations; to draw attention to some of the issues and complexities involved; and to generate a degree of informed enthusiasm for a particularly challenging and important area of work.

The 'real life' situation refers in part to the actual context where whatever we are interested in occurs, whether it be an office, school, hospital, home, street or sports stadium. This book is not primarily about studies carried out in purpose-built laboratories. Not that there is anything particularly unreal about a laboratory. Indeed, a study of the 'real life' in a laboratory makes a

fascinating topic almost worthy of a soap opera – see for example Lynch (1985), a study of 'shop work and shop talk in a research laboratory'. Roll-Hansen (1998) discusses a range of such 'laboratory studies' carried out by sociologists and other social scientists. The point about the laboratory is that it permits a large degree of control over conditions; what is done to people can be very carefully determined and standardized. The slightly sinister undertone which the term 'experiment' tends to have, particularly when one hears about 'experiments with human beings', is a reflection of the fact that deliberate and active control over what is done to people is central to the experimental approach.

In the 'real world' – or 'the field', as the part of the world focused on is often referred to by social researchers (conjuring up visions of intrepid investigators in pith helmets) – that kind of control is often not feasible, even if it were ethically justifiable. Hence, one of the challenges inherent in carrying out investigations in the 'real world' lies in seeking to say something sensible about a complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally 'messy' situation. Another way of saying this, developed later in the book, is that the laboratory approximates to a 'closed' system shut off from external influences, while studies outside the laboratory operate in 'open' systems.

Fixed and Flexible Designs

Experiments, particularly those involving randomized controlled trials (RCTs), are viewed by many as the 'gold standard' for social research (e.g. MacDonald, 1996; Oakley, 1996). Surveys continue to be widely used. Czaja and Blair (1996, p. xv) claim with some justification that 'Few areas of the social sciences are more widely used and valued by our society than survey research.' Experiments and surveys are examples of what Anastas and MacDonald (1994) refer to as *fixed* research designs. Their hallmark is that a very substantial amount of pre-specification about what you are going to do, and how you are going to do it, should take place before you get into the main part of the research study. Carried out in real world settings, they require a developed conceptual framework or theory so that you know in advance what to look for, and extensive pilot work to establish what is going to be feasible. Even when this has been achieved, they call for a degree of control by the researcher which may not be possible. They also have clear specifications about what is needed in order to carry them out to a professional standard. To a large extent, this involves following tried and tested steps and procedures.

However, there is an increasing recognition of the value of some very different approaches to social research. Virtually all fields (including educational research, health-related research, social work research and market research)

and disciplines (including psychology, sociology, anthropology and geography) now have strong advocates for what are commonly called *qualitative designs*. (Hammersley, 2000, provides a well-argued defence of qualitative designs against recent attacks on their relevance to policy-making and practice.) These designs come in many forms and arise from a variety of theoretical positions. Anastas and MacDonald (1994) refer to such designs as *flexible*. The two labels, 'qualitative' and 'flexible', capture important features of such designs. They typically make substantial use of methods which result in qualitative data (in many cases in the form of words). They are also flexible in the sense that much less pre-specification takes place and the design evolves, develops and (to use a term popular with their advocates) 'unfolds' as the research proceeds. I prefer the 'flexible' label because such designs may well make some use of methods which result in data in the form of numbers (quantitative) as well as in the form of words; hence, labelling them as qualitative can be misleading. Indeed, one of the arguments in this text is that there can be considerable advantage in using *mixed-method* designs, that is, designs which make use of two or more methods, and which may yield both quantitative and qualitative data.

Flexible research designs are much more difficult to pin down than fixed designs. This is in part because it is only in recent years that researchers have given consideration to the design issues which they raise. Previously, there had been a tradition in the disciplines of social anthropology and sociology, from which these approaches largely derive, of an 'apprenticeship' model, whereby skill in their use was developed by working alongside someone already skilled. However, since the early 1990s the design of flexible studies using qualitative methods has excited much interest and generated many publications, and an attempt is made in this book to suggest ways in which this task might be approached.

Fixed designs, with their reliance on quantitative data and statistical generalization, are considered by their proponents to be 'scientific'. The scientific status of flexible designs is more in dispute. There are those, mainly from qualitative traditions, who have no wish to have their research viewed as 'science'. My own view, elaborated in the next chapter, is that there are strong arguments for characterizing both fixed and flexible designs as scientific – provided that they are carried out in a systematic, principled, fashion.

Can All This Be Safely Skipped?

I sense that those approaching this text in an instrumental vein – perhaps attracted by the notion that they are in fact going to get the advice, support and assistance in carrying out investigations in the real world which was

promised – may be somewhat dismayed to find that they are letting themselves in for a brief detour into methodology and the nature of science. Obviously, one of the beauties and enduring strengths of books is that they are 'random access devices'. It is up to readers what they select or skip. The marked pages, chapter headings and index are all ways of giving rapid and direct access to the more 'nuts and bolts' aspects of the subject, such as the choice and use of different methods of gathering evidence, analysing different kinds of data, writing a report appropriate to a particular audience, and so on.

Far be it from me to seek to constrain your freedom of access. However, entering into any kind of investigation involving other people is necessarily a complex and sensitive undertaking. To do this effectively and ethically, you need to know what you are doing. If you opt for a fixed design, there are well-established principles and procedures for carrying out a study of high quality which you ignore at your peril. By contrast, it is not possible to specify in advance many of the details of flexible designs. Such designs are necessarily interactive, enabling the sensitive enquirer to capitalize on unexpected eventualities. It is my belief that this process is facilitated by your acquiring some knowledge and understanding of these more general matters covered in the early chapters.

There is a secondary reason for their inclusion which I should make explicit. Advocating flexible designs as a serious possibility for enquiry in the real world is still likely to be viewed as a radical and risky departure in some disciplines, especially those steeped in the statistical sampling paradigm. Justification is called for.

Taking a stance that there are some circumstances where fixed designs are to be preferred, and others where flexible ones are more appropriate, and claiming that the whole can be regarded as a scientific enterprise, is also likely to antagonize those of both scientific and humanistic persuasions. There is a strongly held view that there is an ideological divide between qualitative and quantitative approaches, and that these particular twain should never meet. Following Bryman (1988a) and later commentators such as Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), my view is that many of these differences are more apparent than real and that there can be advantages in combining qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Evaluation, Action Research and Change

Much enquiry in the real world is essentially some form of *evaluation*. Is the organization of educational provision for children with special needs such as learning difficulties, or problems with sight or hearing, working effectively in a particular local authority area? Does a service catering for abused children

actually serve the interests of the children concerned? Can a business improve its interviewing procedures for new sales staff? Evaluation brings to the fore a very different agenda of issues from those usually associated with 'pure' research. For example, issues to do with change (How can it be implemented? What are the barriers to implementation? How might they be overcome?) often loom large. There are influential approaches within applied social research, such as *action research*, which regard supporting and engineering change as an integral part of the research process. Evaluation and action research form the main focus of chapter 7.

Should you, as a researcher, get involved in these processes? One possible stance is that the researcher's responsibility stops with achieving some understanding of what is going on, and communicating that information to those directly concerned. An alternative view is that it is part of the researcher's job to use this understanding to suggest ways in which desirable change might take place, and perhaps to monitor the effectiveness of these attempts. There are no general solutions to these questions. The answers in each case depend to a considerable extent on the situation in which you find yourself. Certainly, someone attempting to carry out a form of enquiry into the situation in which they themselves are working or living may find that the change aspects become virtually impossible to separate out from the enquiry itself.

This mention of what amounts to 'self-evaluation' opens up a further Pandora's Box. At one extreme, some would doubt the feasibility of insiders carrying out any worthwhile, credible or objective enquiry into a situation in which they are centrally involved. At the other extreme, those associated with movements such as 'collaborative research' (e.g. Schensul and Schensul, 1992), 'participatory action research' (Kemmis and Wilkinson, 1998) or 'participatory evaluation' (e.g. Cousins and Earl, 1995) maintain that outsider research is ineffective research, at least as far as change and development are concerned. My sympathies tend to lie in the latter camp, though I recognize both the problems and stresses of doing 'insider' research, and the need for specialists in research and methodology. The role that such specialists should take on then becomes an important issue. One thing they need to be able to do is to 'give away' skills – an important skill in its own right.

All of this carries with it the implication that the 'real world enquirer' needs to have knowledge, skills and expertise in areas outside the likely competence of most laboratory-oriented researchers. How change comes about in individuals and groups is itself an immense research area, some knowledge of which is likely to be helpful if you are involved in its implementation. At a more down-to-earth level, a very strong sense of audience is needed to guide the style, content and length of any report or other communication arising from the enquiry. If an important objective is concerned with change, then a report which does not get its findings across to the decision-makers in that situation is a waste of time.

The Audience for this Book

> *The main focus is on those wanting to carry out, or advise on the carrying out of, small-scale projects about individuals and groups and their problems and concerns, and/or about the services, systems and organizations in which they find themselves.*

In part, this is an attempt to arm potential social researchers with tools and expertise that they can both use for themselves and 'give away' to others to use. I also have the hope, based on experience, that it will help to equip practitioners in the helping and caring professions, and others working with people, to undertake useful enquiry into their own and others' practice, with a view to understanding, developing and changing it.

A word to those with a social science background

It is my strong impression that, for carrying out real world enquiry, the exact social science disciplinary background of the potential researcher is not all that important. A psychology graduate is likely to have been well steeped in experimental design and to know little about qualitative approaches (although such approaches are now being taken seriously by an increasing proportion of departments), whereas a sociology graduate will be likely to have had the reverse experience.

The approach taken in this book is deliberately promiscuous. Strategies and techniques which have tended to be linked to different disciplines have been brought together in the attempt to give enquirers a range of options appropriate to the research questions they are asking. Hence it is hoped that those from a range of social science disciplines will find material which is both useful and accessible.

A word to practitioners and those without a social science background

My experience is that the approaches advocated here can be accessible to those without a background or training in the social sciences. The things that social researchers do are not all that different from those done in a variety of other trades and professions. Northmore (1996), for example, writing for investigative journalists, reveals many similarities. The research task has also been compared with that of the detective: information is gathered; a 'case' is made on the basis of evidence; the 'modus operandi' of a suspect is

studied; decisions are made about the best explanation, etc. (Scriven, 1976). There are obvious linkages, too, with the approaches taken by therapists and counsellors, and others in the helping professions; and in humanities disciplines such as history. It remains a matter of controversy how far the practice of social research is 'common sense' (see e.g. the debate between Lamal, 1991, and Locke and Latham, 1991). A problem is that you 'know not what it is that you know not' and may rush in blindly or blithely without realizing the complexity of the situation. My advice is that you seek to appreciate the implications of carrying out a *scientific* study. If you are not from a scientific background, or are 'anti-science', please try to keep your prejudices in check. The next chapter aims, among other things, to clear away some common misconceptions about the scientific approach. You won't be expected to wear a white coat or, necessarily, to crunch numbers.

Associated with the scientific approach is the need for rigour and for rules or principles of procedure. However, as has already been stressed, many real world studies both permit and require a flexibility in design and execution which may well appeal to those with a background in the arts or humanities. Well-written-up research designed on a flexible model can provide a compelling account. A major theme of this book is how to introduce rigour into all aspects of enquiry so that we achieve a justified credibility and trustworthiness in what we find and write up.

If you do not have a social science background, you will be at a disadvantage compared to those who do in two main ways. First, the carrying out of a systematic enquiry calls for a set of particular skills – for example, in observing and interviewing, designing, analysing, interpreting and reporting. The development of these skills requires practice, which takes time. This can and should have taken place during a training in most social science subjects; but in the absence of such a training, you will have to learn 'on the job', or to sub-contract some or all of these tasks out to others who do have the necessary skills.

Second – and this is more difficult to remedy – the social sciences have a substantive content of theories, models and findings which in general you will not know about. I am genuinely unsure as to how much of a disadvantage this constitutes. One obvious solution is to work in partnership, or on some kind of consultancy basis, with a professional social researcher. If you are a practitioner or professional, trained and experienced in the field forming the subject of the research, then you will have at your disposal a corresponding, and possibly more useful, set of theories, models etc. to those deriving from the 'pure' social science disciplines. This is not to minimize the importance of theory. It simply makes the point that a theoretical framework can be acquired by a variety of means (including interaction with, and analysis of, the data you have collected).

When, as will often be the case, the intention is to assist individuals, groups or organizations to understand, and possibly develop or change, some aspect of themselves and the situation in which they find themselves, there is virtue in staying close to the concepts and language they themselves use. Certainly, unassimilated jargon often accentuates the commonly acknowledged theory/practice divide.

The basic claim being made here is that principled enquiry can be of help in gaining an understanding of the human situation and its manifestations in an office, factory, school, hospital or any other environment, and in initiating sensible change and development. It is important not to claim too much, however. Common sense, management fiat, hunches, committee meetings and the like are going to continue to form the main precursors to action. But getting enquiry on the agenda, as something likely to be of assistance if there is an important decision to be made or problem to be dealt with, would be a step forward. And if you can consult a sympathetic expert for advice and support, you may well find that your efforts are more effective.

Returning to the Real World

The proposal for a real world emphasis is as much about an attitude of mind as an invitation to come out of the laboratory closet. It is reflected in several dichotomies – suggesting, for example, applied research rather than pure or basic research; policy research, not theoretical research. These dichotomies are probably not very helpful as they suggest absolute distinctions. Hakim (1987) sees the differences more in terms of emphasis. For her, the main features that distinguish policy research from theoretical research are:

> an emphasis on the substantive or practical importance of research results rather than on merely 'statistically significant' findings, and second, a multi-disciplinary approach which in turn leads to the eclectic and catholic use of any and all research designs which might prove helpful in answering the questions posed. (p. 172)

As Rossi (1980) has pointed out, well-designed policy research can not only be of value to those concerned with determining policy, but may also be of interest to one or more academic disciplines. Trist (1976) goes further and claims that while the natural sciences first generate pure research findings and then apply them, social sciences make theoretical progress only through application. The argument is that the only way to get the proper access needed to study people in real life settings is through proving your 'competence in supplying some kind of service' (p. 46). Hence practice helps to improve theory,

which in turn helps to improve practice. This is the 'action research' perspective, discussed in chapter 7. It is an overstatement to claim that all real world research must follow this pattern, but an active symbiotic link between researcher and researched is a very common feature.

Hall and Hall (1996) view this link as a partnership:

> The research relationship is between equals and is not exploitative: the client organization is not being 'used' merely to develop academic theory or careers nor is the academic community being 'used' (brains being picked). There is a genuine *exchange*. The research is negotiated. (p. 12; emphasis in original)

The emphases associated with adopting the metaphor of the real world are very different from those of laboratory-based experimentalists. Box 1.1 suggests some of the dimensions involved. Weick (1985) provides contrasting examples of 'artificial' and 'real world' approaches. In crude terms, you might be better able to vary anticipatory stress experimentally and control other factors in a laboratory study, but there is much to be gained by transferring the enquiry to the dentist's chair (Anderson et al., 1991).

Bickman (1980) presents an extended analysis of these differing emphases in the context of approaches to social psychology research. Not all of the aspects shown in box 1.1 will occur in any particular enquiry, but together they go some way to capturing the kind of enterprise that this book is seeking to foster. Academic researchers may not feel that the suggestions about open-ended availability of time and money chime in too well with their experience but, to take a strict line, there is little point in their carrying out studies intended to advance their discipline if the resources available are inadequate. In the real world context, the game is different – in its crudest form, you tell the sponsors what they will get for their money, and either they buy it or they don't!

Entering into this kind of real world enquiry could, with some justice, be viewed as capitulation to the values of an enterprise culture. There are obvious dangers in being a 'hired hand'. You may, overtly or covertly, be serving the agendas of those in positions of power (Scheurich, 1997): perhaps being hired to seek sticking-plaster solutions to complex and intractable problems. However, there is the advantage that letting society, in the guise of the client or sponsor, have some role in determining the focus of an enquiry makes it more likely that the findings will be both usable and likely to be used. Some support for this assertion comes from a study by Weiss and Bucuvalas (1980). They analysed fifty studies in the field of mental health. Thirteen were commissioned to answer specific questions; the rest were initiated by researchers. At least six decision-makers rated each study. Although differences were small, the commissioned research studies tended to get higher ratings on usefulness than the others. It is important to note, though, that the quality of the research

Box 1.1

Characterizing real world enquiry

In real world enquiry the emphasis tends to be on:

solving problems	rather than	*just gaining knowledge*
getting large effects (looking for robust results) and *concern for actionable factors* (where changes are feasible)	rather than	*relationships between variables* (and assessing statistical significance)
field	rather than	*laboratory*
outside organization (industry, business, school, etc.)	rather than	*research institution*
strict time constraints	rather than	*as long as the problem needs*
strict cost constraints	rather than	*as much finance as the problem needs* (or the work isn't attempted)
little consistency of topic from one study to the next	rather than	*high consistency of topic from one study to the next*
topic initiated by sponsor	rather than	*topic initiated by researcher*
often generalist researchers (need for familiarity with range of methods)	rather than	*typically highly specialist researchers* (need to be at forefront of their discipline)
multiple methods	rather than	*single methods*
oriented to the client (generally, and particularly in reporting)	rather than	*oriented to academic peers*
currently viewed as dubious by many academics	rather than	*high academic prestige*
need for well developed social skills	rather than	*some need of social skills*

was seen as a more important factor than whether the research was commissioned or researcher-initiated. Studies rated higher on methodological quality were judged significantly more useful. The need, then, is for high-quality, methodologically sophisticated research – both where researchers follow their own noses, and also where they work on others' questions.

Enquiry may be thought of as a way of solving problems, which may range from the purely theoretical to the totally practical. Box 1.2 presents a list of

Box 1.2

Approaches to problem-solving

A The traditional approach: 'science only'

1 Basic research. Application to problem-solving in the real world not usually seen as an objective.

2 Less basic, but still 'pure' or 'theoretical'. Application not a high priority and is usually left to others.

3 Research on practical problems. Application seen as a possible but not a necessary outcome, and is often left to others.

B Building bridges between researcher and user

4 Researcher believes work has practical implications and should be used. Seeks to disseminate results widely and in accessible language.

5 Researcher obtains client collaboration on researcher-designed project. Researcher would like client to be influenced by research outcome.

6 As (5), but in addition researcher takes steps to give client regular feedback on progress, problems and outcomes. During feedback, client has an opportunity to check on interim findings and contribute own analysis and interpretation. Researcher attempts to help in implementation.

C Researcher–client equality

7 Researcher and client together discuss problem area(s) and jointly formulate research design. Research involves active collaboration and some measure of control on part of client. Implementation is part of the collaborative design. May be termed 'research action' as fact-finding takes precedence over implementation.

continued

8 As (7), but initiative taken by client who identifies the problem. This is taken by researcher as the 'presenting problem'. Early stages of the research consider whether there are other issues which should receive primary attention. 'Research action' or 'action research' depending on relative attention to research and implementation.

9 As (8), but the problem identified by the client is not questioned and research proceeds on that basis. Likely to be 'action research' with the researcher paying most attention to implementation.

D Client–professional exploration

10 A client with a problem requests help from a researcher/academic. Collection of new data (if any) is minimal. Advice or recommendation is based on researcher's past experience and knowledge of the field. If this takes place in an organization, then training or organization development is a frequent outcome.

E Client-dominated quest

11 Client requests help from a specialist or colleague with social science background. Specialist examines problem, interprets 'best current knowledge', makes a diagnosis and suggests a line of action.

12 As (11), but help is requested from non-specialist without social science background (may be familiar with more popular literature). 'Best current knowledge' will be interpreted at second or third hand, heavily influenced by personal experience and 'common sense'.

(Adapted and abridged from Heller, 1986, pp. 4–6.)

different possible approaches to problem-solving. It describes a dimension from pure to applied, and of increasing contribution from the client. The main thrust of this book is towards the mid-range of these approaches, say from type 3 through to type 9. Where a particular study will lie on this continuum depends crucially on your individual circumstances. The more client-dominated approaches (from type 10 to type 12) do not concern us here, irrespective of any views one might have about them, as they involve little or no empirical data collection. There is no intention to make a value judgement suggesting that any one of the mid-range methods is intrinsically superior or inferior to any other. Heller (1986) claims that, in terms of utilization of research outcomes, there is evidence in favour of the approaches within

section B ('Building bridges between researcher and user') and section C ('Researcher–client equality'). He goes on to point out, however, that the limitation of depending on these approaches is their emphasis on current issues:

> Research on the effect of the media on imitative behaviour should not wait for an increase in violence or political misgivings. Research on trade-union decision-making practices should not wait until there is a political demand for change: social cost research should precede redundancy crises. (p. 10)

This argues for a broad spread of approaches, with researchers choosing the one most suitable to the research questions that interest them. However, before getting down to design specifics, the next chapter tries to provide a more general context.

Further Reading

Burton, D., ed. (2000) *Research Training for Social Scientists*. London: Sage. Comprehensive and wide-ranging set of short contributions. Aimed at postgraduate student researchers but more widely relevant.

Hall, D. and Hall, I. (1996) *Practical Social Research: Project Work in the Community*. London: Macmillan. Accessible introduction to applied social research. Emphasis on collaborative research in partnership with local organizations.

Kaplan, A. (1964) *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science*. San Francisco: Chandler. Classic book on methodology by friendly but critical philosopher. Emphasizes the common concerns of the different disciplines and the community of scholarship between the humanities and the social sciences. Wise, readable and challenging.

Mertens, D. M. (1998) *Research Methods in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, Calif., and London: Sage. Big text with full treatment of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Focus on issues of race, gender and disability.

Oskamp, S. and Schultz, P. W. (1998) *Applied Social Psychology*, 2nd edn. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Emphasizes real world problems and social issues including health care, environmental problems, legal issues, educational questions, the mass media and life in organizations. Multidisciplinary; covers work by sociologists, communication researchers and economists as well as social psychologists. Discusses applicability and the applied vs theoretical conflict (ch. 1).

Scheurich, J. J. (1997) *Research Method in the Postmodern*. London: Falmer. Postmodern theory challenges preconceptions about research method. This text shows its implications for research practice.