

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <i>List of Boxes</i>  | xi        |
| <i>List of Figures</i>                                      | xiii      |
| <i>List of Tables</i>                                       | xv        |
| <i>About the Author</i>                                     | xvii      |
| <i>Preface to the Second Edition</i>                        | xix       |
| <b>Part I Orientation</b>                                   | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>1 Why Social Research?</b>                               | <b>3</b>  |
| What is Social Research?                                    | 3         |
| The Tasks of Social Research                                | 6         |
| What Can You Achieve with Social Research?                  | 8         |
| Quantitative and Qualitative Research                       | 9         |
| Doing Research On-site and Doing it Online                  | 13        |
| Why and How Research Can Be Fun                             | 13        |
| Orientation in the Field of Social Research                 | 14        |
| <b>2 Worldviews in Social Research</b>                      | <b>19</b> |
| Introduction  | 19        |
| Positivism  | 20        |
| Critical Rationalism  | 21        |
| Interpretative Paradigm                                     | 23        |
| Constructionism   | 25        |
| Social Research between Fundamentalism and Pragmatism       | 26        |
| Conclusion  | 28        |
| Guideline Questions for Locating Procedures in Epistemology | 28        |
| <b>3 Ethical Issues in Social Research</b>                  | <b>31</b> |
| Principles of Ethically Acceptable Research                 | 32        |
| Informed Consent  | 32        |
| Confidentiality, Anonymity and Data Protection              | 34        |
| How to Avoid Causing Harm to Participants                   | 36        |
| Codes of Ethics   | 38        |
| Ethics Committees   | 38        |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Rules of Good Scientific Practice                | 40 |
| Research Ethics: Cases and Mass Research         | 40 |
| Research Ethics in Online Research               | 40 |
| Conclusion                                       | 42 |
| Checklist for Taking Ethical Issues into Account | 42 |

#### **4 From Research Idea to Research Question 45**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Starting Points for Research                    | 45 |
| Origins of Research Questions                   | 47 |
| Characteristics of Research Questions           | 49 |
| Good Research Questions, Bad Research Questions | 51 |
| The Use of Hypotheses                           | 52 |
| Checklist for Formulating Research Questions    | 54 |

### **Part II Planning and Design 57**

#### **5 Reading and Reviewing the Literature 59**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| The Scope of a Literature Review                          | 59 |
| What Do We Mean by 'Literature'?                          | 60 |
| Finding Literature  | 62 |
| Areas of Literature                                       | 63 |
| Reading Empirical Studies                                 | 64 |
| Using the Literature                                      | 65 |
| Documentation and Referencing                             | 66 |
| Plagiarism and How to Avoid it                            | 67 |
| Checklist for Finding, Assessing and Reviewing Literature | 69 |

#### **6 Planning Social Research: Steps in the Research Process 73**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Overview of the Research Process                                 | 73 |
| The Research Process in Quantitative Research                    | 74 |
| The Research Process in Qualitative Research                     | 79 |
| Comparing the Processes of Quantitative and Qualitative Research | 84 |
| Checklist for Planning an Empirical Study                        | 86 |

#### **7 Designing Social Research 89**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Writing a Proposal for a Research Project  | 89  |
| Developing a Timescale                     | 91  |
| Designing a Study                          | 94  |
| Sampling                                   | 100 |
| Checklist for Designing an Empirical Study | 106 |

#### **8 Deciding on Your Methods 109**

|                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Decisions in the Research Process  | 109 |
| Decisions in Quantitative Research | 110 |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Decisions in Qualitative Research                      | 117        |
| Decisions within Quantitative and Qualitative Research | 124        |
| Deciding between Qualitative and Quantitative Research | 124        |
| Deciding between Doing Research On-site or Online      | 125        |
| Deciding on Specific Approaches to Research            | 125        |
| Reflection Halfway through the Process                 | 126        |
| Checklist for Choosing a Specific Method               | 127        |
| <b>Part III Working with Data</b>                      | <b>129</b> |
| <b>9 Collecting Quantitative and Qualitative Data</b>  | <b>131</b> |
| Surveys and Interviews                                 | 131        |
| Observation  | 148        |
| Working with Documents                                 | 152        |
| Obtaining and Documenting Information                  | 156        |
| Checklist for Designing Data Collection                | 160        |
| <b>10 Analyzing Quantitative and Qualitative Data</b>  | <b>163</b> |
| Content Analysis                                       | 163        |
| Quantitative Data Analysis                             | 170        |
| Qualitative Analysis                                   | 178        |
| Case Studies and Typologies                            | 193        |
| Checklist for Analyzing Data                           | 194        |
| <b>11 E-Research: Doing Social Research Online</b>     | <b>197</b> |
| What is E-Research and Why Do it?                      | 197        |
| Sampling and Access                                    | 198        |
| Online Surveys, Interviews and Focus Groups            | 200        |
| Virtual Ethnography                                    | 204        |
| Analyzing Internet Documents and Interactions          | 204        |
| E-Research Today: Using Web 2.0                        | 206        |
| Checklist for Designing Social Research Online         | 207        |
| <b>12 Triangulation and Mixed Methods</b>              | <b>211</b> |
| Limits of Quantitative Research                        | 212        |
| Limits of Qualitative Research                         | 214        |
| Combining Different Approaches                         | 216        |
| Mixed Methods  | 217        |
| Triangulation  | 218        |
| E-Research as a Complementary Strategy                 | 222        |
| Pragmatism and the Issue as Points of Reference        | 223        |
| Triangulation in Social Research and its Limits        | 224        |
| Checklist for Designing Combinations of Methods        | 224        |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Part IV Reflection and Writing</b>                             | <b>227</b> |
| <b>13 What is Good Research? Evaluating Your Research Project</b> | <b>229</b> |
| Evaluating Empirical Studies                                      | 229        |
| Quality and Evaluation of Quantitative Research                   | 230        |
| Quality and Evaluation of Qualitative Research                    | 236        |
| Generalization  | 239        |
| Standards and Quality in E-Research                               | 241        |
| Checklist for Evaluating a Research Project                       | 242        |
| <b>14 Writing up Research and Using Results</b>                   | <b>245</b> |
| Goals of Writing Up Social Research                               | 246        |
| Writing Up Quantitative Research                                  | 246        |
| Writing Up Qualitative Research                                   | 250        |
| Issues of Writing   | 256        |
| Outlets for Writing   | 256        |
| Feeding Back Results to Participants                              | 257        |
| Using Data in Debate  | 258        |
| Checklist for Presenting Empirical Procedures                     | 260        |
| <i>Glossary</i>   | 263        |
| <i>References</i>   | 273        |
| <i>Name Index</i>   | 285        |
| <i>Subject Index</i>  | 289        |