

EMOTION AND THE RESEARCHER

Sites, Subjectivities and
Relationships

Edited by Tracey Loughran and
Dawn Mannay

STUDIES IN QUALITATIVE
METHODOLOGY

VOLUME 16

EMOTION AND THE RESEARCHER:
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RELATIONSHIPS

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**EMOTION AND THE
RESEARCHER: SITES,
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RELATIONSHIPS**

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We both co-convened the interdisciplinary Families, Identities and Gender Research Network (FIG) at Cardiff University, with our colleagues Dr Siwan Rosser, Dr Melanie Bigold, Dr Katherine Shelton and Dr Stephanie Ward. We held a number of events that invited cross-disciplinary perspectives on the immensely complex topics of families, identities and gender, which foregrounded many of the issues that led to the creation of this volume. Papers presented at the series of 'Emotion and the Researcher' workshops, co-convened with the Women's History Network (West of England and South Wales), generated many of the following chapters. In the later workshop series, 'Constructing and Deconstructing Selfhood', we were joined by Dr Agata Lisiak. We are grateful for funding for this later event from the Economic and Social Research Council's Wales Doctoral Training Centre. We would also like to thank all of the presenters and delegates at these workshops. Even those who did not write chapters were in many ways the guiding muse for this collection.

It is also important to thank all of the individual authors for engaging with the project and offering a set of diverse and thoughtful accounts and reflections, drawing on their extensive knowledge and expertise. The authors have recounted their own experiences of research, generously sharing their approach to their craft and the uncertainties, concerns, enjoyments and questions it entails. Many of the contributors are friends and colleagues that we met through the workshops in Cardiff and at other international conferences. However, we feel that we have come to know the authors more closely through the editing process. We have a deep respect for the research and scholarship of all the authors in this collection, and we were privileged that they accepted the invitation to be part of *Emotion and the Researcher*. Overall, the authors' enthusiasm for the collection and their carefully crafted responses

have engendered an inspiring set of chapters, and, in reading them, we have gained a wealth of knowledge, developed more nuanced understandings of emotion and gained a deeper appreciation of its place within and beyond interdisciplinary applications.

Dr Mike Ward was particularly helpful in selecting a publisher and providing advice drawn from his own experience publishing in Emerald's *Studies in Qualitative Methodology* series. We are grateful to Dr Sam Hillyard and Dr Philippa Grand for their invaluable help and guidance in developing the initial proposal for this book, and for their ongoing support and encouragement. The wider editorial team at Emerald should be acknowledged for their involvement, particularly Rachel Ward, who worked with us patiently to attend to all the essential administrative tasks that were necessary to move forward. We are also indebted to a wide range of authors and inspiring speakers and although we cannot name them all individually, much of their work is cited in the book.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CF	Cystic Fibrosis
EMG	Electromyography
ERC	European Research Council
GSR	Galvanic Skin Response
HP	Health Professional
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PHP	Pre-Healthcare Professional
RG	Remedial Gymnast
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
UN	United Nations
WLM	Women's Liberation Movement
WTC	Women's Therapy Centre

FOREWORD

By Janet Fink

In an article about the role of emotions in feminist research, Kristin Blakely (2007, p. 60) asks the question:

Suppose we turn the focus inward, reflecting not on the research but actually how we respond to our research, and suppose that we feel the research instead of just thinking it?

This provocation to suppose is part of a wider argument that emotionally engaged research ‘opens up space for new questions, ideas and interpretations’ (Blakely, 2007, p. 65), and it is just such a determination to suppose that is at the core of this important new interdisciplinary collection and its careful interrogation of the place of emotions in empirical research and the production of knowledge.

Given that, if we are sufficiently attentive to their presence, the complex dynamics of emotions can be traced, inter alia, through the development of research funding bids, responses to peer reviews, applications for ethical approval, fieldwork relationships, interpretations of data and the dissemination of findings – in short, ‘the everyday’ of our research practices – it is surprising that so few collections such as this exist. It is especially so since some of the most constant features of qualitative research are the emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) demanded by its research practices (particularly when feminist in principle) and the emotionally fraught ethical dilemmas (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) that emerge, often unpredictably, at every stage of the research process. Yet, at the same time, it is arguably not so surprising that such collections do not have a more visible presence on our bookshelves and in our libraries. As researchers we regularly have to negotiate feelings of respect, guilt, anger or anxiety in making decisions about what is ‘the unsayable and the unspeakable’; ‘who to represent and how’ and ‘what to omit and what to include’ (Ryan-Flood & Gill, 2010, p. 3). It is not always easy to be open and transparent about such decisions or the emotions that inflect them, and so secrecy, silences and omissions can be recurrent aspects of our research,

research practices and research outputs (Ryan-Flood & Gill, 2010). However, as Sara Ahmed (2010, p. xvii) reminds us:

'secrets' aren't simply information or details that are passed or not passed. A secret might be something we keep from ourselves, something that is too hard or too painful to come to light.

It is noteworthy, then, that the authors in this collection *have* brought into the light aspects of their research and of themselves as researchers that they have found difficult to bear or to question, and they have been carefully reflexive about the reasons for this. They thus offer richly detailed examples to readers of how not only to 'trouble' taken-for-granted research practices, in which the researcher is assumed to maintain a neutral and objective standpoint, but also to reflect on the social, political and ethical relations of research generally. Crucially, at the core of these examples are wider theoretical and methodological debates about the meanings and study of emotions (Bailey & Barclay, 2017; Brownlie, 2014; Burkitt, 2014; Lupton, 1998; Smart, 2007) and the importance of presenting thick, vibrant accounts of research encounters and the embodied, sentient lives of research participants (Back, 2013; Gabb & Fink, 2017).

This collection thus echoes the content and concerns of papers presented at two workshops, titled 'Emotion and the Researcher', which were co-hosted in 2014 at Cardiff University by its Families, Identities, and Gender Research Network (FIG) and the Women's History Network (West of England and South Wales). As a member of the audience at one of the workshops and presenter at another, these events were deeply memorable for a number of reasons. First, they provided a 'safe place' for presentations in which emotions generated in and by different research topics, methods and collaborations could be shared with colleagues. Second, the audience was able to respond in kind by relating their own emotional responses to the presentations and the ways their research had evoked similar or different feelings. Third, for some presenters and audience members, these interactions enabled an often long overdue opportunity to acknowledge and process feelings generated either in the field, in the archive, during analysis or when writing up findings. And fourth, the workshops illustrated that 'emotionally sensed knowledge' is never readily or simply attained, not least because 'the epistemological status of such knowledge is always complex, uncertain and provisional' (Bowlby & Day, [this volume], p. 129). The trope of 'journeys' was thus regularly drawn upon in discussions as a way of examining the many different and sometimes arduous paths taken to develop the skills of emotional, ethical and caring reflexivity (Rallis & Rossman, 2010) and of elucidating how emotion is woven

into the spatial and temporal dimensions of qualitative research as well as academic research careers.

Like the two workshops, this edited collection will productively animate and engage those just embarking on their research careers as well as those who have undertaken multiple projects. The authors encourage us to witness how re-focusing our analytic lens onto the secret, liminal or elided emotional landscapes of our research results in richer and more complicated understandings of epistemology, methodology, reflexivity and ontology. They have thus successfully and powerfully answered Blakely's (2007, p. 60) question about what happens when *we feel the research instead of just thinking it*.

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