Wherever I go there I am: reflections on reflexivity and the research stance

Tricia Le Gallais [a]

[a] Birmingham City University, Birmingham, UK

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Wherever I go there I am: reflections on reflexivity and the research stance

Tricia Le Gallais*

Birmingham City University, Birmingham, UK

Insider/outsider research has received considerable attention often with in-depth consideration of how such positioning affects both researcher and research. This study is intended to engage with these issues from the perspective of a new researcher seeking to understand more intimately the ways in which research position informs subsequent insights. Thus, the article explores the researcher's own experiences of insider/outsider research and, in the course of this, challenges the notion of absolute insider- or outsiderness. Furthermore, the work also looks to expand upon the suggestion raised by Hellawell (2006) with regard to the potential of such analysis for enhancing researcher reflexivity. Becoming a skilled researcher and understanding the link between position and derived insights is only accomplished through action and reflection (experience). Thus, the writer explores the application of a range of tools which continue to deepen her appreciation of the complexities of insider/outsider research and thereby enhance her reflexivity. This enhanced self-awareness has been reciprocal in nature, i.e., in seeking to understand the meaning structures of others the researcher has become more aware of the nuanced nature of research in terms of her own values, beliefs and identity construction and the influence upon her practice. The writer suggests that the tools and insights derived from her research journey may prove of use to the neophyte researcher in terms of practical suggestions for developing self-awareness and enriching their learning process.

Keywords: insider/outsider research positioning; reflexivity; research tools; the new researcher

Introduction

In 1999–2000 I took leave of absence from my job for one year to undertake a masters degree. My MA thesis focused on the mentoring system at Waveridge School,[1] a comprehensive school in the West Midlands, England, where I had worked for several years as a senior teacher. I was also a mentor and, for the purposes of this research, I considered myself to be an insider researcher/participant observer.

Having completed my MA in 2000 I took up an appointment as a researcher at Riverford College, an FE college in the West Midlands, England. During my time at Riverford I began to realise that my assumed outsider status was being steadily eroded as I experienced more and more events alongside the research participants. Sharing such past histories offered me a greater awareness and understanding of the in-group's[2] culture, ethos, values and attitudes (Le Gallais, 2003). I was, though, aware that these insights might endanger the perceived validity of my findings as I became less the objective stranger (Schutz, 1976) and more the prophet in my own land (Robson, 2002).

Reflecting upon this situation I realised that my research stance at Waveridge School had also shifted towards the end, in this case from insider to outsider as my year's leave drew to a close and I decided to take up the research post at Riverford College. Such reflections caused me

---

*Email: tricia.legallais@bcu.ac.uk

to examine more critically what exactly constituted insider/outsider research and to explore what steps I might take to ensure that I was sensitive to any impact such insider/outsider perceptions might have upon my professional practice. The identification of sameness and difference in the two research arenas also helped to facilitate a greater degree of reflexivity with regard to my research.

This paper comprises two parts. In the first part I explore the concept of insider/outsider research through the vehicle of my own experiences as a researcher in two educational settings. Much of my inspiration for this article arose from reading Schutz's (1976) ethnographic study of the stranger, which I have utilised as a framework for this paper. In the second part I outline how I adopted a systematic approach in my analysis of insider/outsider research and I share examples of the tools applied.

In some ways this article is a response to Conteh, Gregory, Kearney and Mor-Sommerfield's (2006, p. xxii) lament that:

> As writers, we struggled with our own studies and did not see that struggle reflected in general methodology books which portrayed the task as unconvincingly simple. We wanted to read the work of others who had also struggled… who did not just tell us how to conduct a study but shared with us the ups and downs, the blockages and breakthroughs and the messiness of the whole endeavour.

It is hoped that the sharing of my research journey with all its failings, surprises and successes may benefit researchers new to the field and encourage them to try out similar strategies to enhance their reflective practice and increase their reflexive awareness.

Part 1: personal reflections on insider/outsider research

My role as an insider researcher at Waveridge School

> The member of the in-group[3] looks in one single glance through the normal social situations occurring to him[4] and… he catches immediately the ready-made recipe appropriate to its solution… (Schutz, 1976, p. 108)

The insider researcher has, as a member of the 'in-group', access to its past and present histories. Such shared experiences engender a sense of sameness (Jenkins, 2000) leading to the awareness of a group or collective identity (Merton, 1972; Viskovic & Robson, 2001). This enables group members to set the boundaries of the way they live and work (Schopflin, 2001). Furthermore, our habitus also impacts upon our responses to situations in that we attempt to 'fit' them into the taken for granted ways of doing and thinking within our 'familiar milieu' (Scahill, 2005). It is for this reason that insider researchers require heightened sensitivity to such routines and boundary mechanisms which may otherwise impair their 'clearsightedness' (Schutz, 1976) and lead them to perceive what they expect to perceive (Hockey, 1993). Further dangers for insider researchers concern their 'dual roles of investigator and employee' (Morse, 1998, p. 61) and their personal involvement in and proximity to the setting which might challenge the validity of the research. Coghlan and Brannick (2007, p. 60) counter such concerns by stressing the value of the 'rich and complex' knowledge which the insider possesses with regard to the systems of the institution, of which s/he is a member.

Such 'rich and complex' knowledge aided me in the research I conducted at Waveridge School. I benefited from all the advantages of being attuned to the nuances and idioms of a shared language and collective identity. My inside knowledge of the research location enabled me to short-cut much of the mutual familiarisation phase usually necessary to seek out common ground and establish a research relationship. I saw my position as a practitioner researcher

legitimated through my own experience of mentoring and teaching at the same school (Miller & Glassner, 1997).

Waveridge's mentoring programme had been set up by the management in an instrumental response to league table pressures with the directive that only those students with estimated borderline D/C grades should be mentored. A strong pastoral ethos within the school led most mentors to reject such constraints and covertly mentor any student requesting their support. Had I entered the research arena as an outsider researcher the dominant feature of the mentoring programme would have been its instrumental raison d'être; I might not have identified and thereby been able to draw upon the historical perspective of strong pastoral commitment in my study of *The principle-centred mentor* (Le Gallais, 2000). However, this very familiarity with the mentoring programme meant that I did not fully appreciate the implications of my managerial status for the research relationship (Robson, 2002). Having sought to create in my own sphere of influence an empowering 'task' culture (Handy, 1999) I had not recognised the pervasive influence of Waveridge's dominant web culture.

Moving locations and researcher stance

> The stranger… approaches the other group as a newcomer in the true meaning of the term. At best he may be able to share the present and the future… however he remains excluded from such experiences of its past. Seen from the point of view of the approached group, he is a man without a history. (Schutz, 1976, p. 104)

When I took up my research post at Riverford College I saw myself as approaching the in-group 'without a (shared) history'. I had never experienced FE as a place of work or study. The culture, ethos, staff and students were unfamiliar to me. The key area of my research brief was based within a vocational curriculum and my educational and teaching background would best be described as 'academic'. At this stage I seriously questioned whether *I* should be doing this research (Haw, 1996).

However, the principal of Riverford College stressed her intention 'to engage someone not associated with the ethos of the college to evaluate the ventures being undertaken' (Le Gallais, 2001b) since being 'emotionally' committed to the vision made it hard for an 'insider' to offer the objectivity required for a critical analysis of the progress. Such close involvement in the project left them vulnerable to the 'dangers of "restricted vision" and "overrapport", those nemeses of getting too close' (Hong & Duff, 2002, p. 194). The principal's concerns support Robson's (2002, p. 535) opinion that 'outside advice may be more highly valued'. Initially I believed that my outsider stance at Riverford College facilitated my objectivity in the way that a:

> … stranger does not share the (in-group's) basic assumptions. He becomes essentially the man who has to place in question nearly everything that seems to be unquestionable to the members of the approached group. (Schutz, 1976, p. 104)

> I was aware that, not sharing in the former construction trades and past FE history of the participants within the research arena, I would indeed be questioning much that others took for granted: … every social group… has its own private code, understandable only by those who have participated in the common past experiences in which it took rise. … Only members of the in-group have the scheme of expression as a genuine one in hand and command it freely within their thinking as usual. (Schutz, 1976, p. 107)

However, as time passed it was inevitable that I would eventually be in the position of sharing not only present but also past histories – albeit partially – with the research participants. Having been appointed for my outsider status I was aware of the potential difficulties I might encounter

as I began to share the in-group's common understandings and taken-for-granted ways of doing and seeing things. In addition, my initial assumption of absolute outsiderness was crumbling as I identified much in my own past which accorded with the research participants' life histories.

The stranger going native?

> The approaching stranger, however, is about to translate himself from an unconcerned onlooker into a would-be member of the approached group… (Schutz, 1976, p. 105)

Just as Hockey (1993) describes the danger for the insider researcher of 'the native going stranger', the possible concern for the outsider researcher's objectivity is that of 'the stranger going native'. Schutz's (1976) ethnographic study describes this process as a transition for the stranger from possessing no history to a position where he is able to fill 'vacant frames' with 'vivid experiences' and where the 'remoteness' of the new social world 'changes into proximity' (ibid., p. 111). As people meet each challenge, each experience alien to their previous 'thinking as usual' framework for interpreting their social world, they begin what Schutz calls 'a process of inquiry'. The new experience is explored, interpreted and assimilated into their knowledge base. In my case my initial impressions of the college culture were challenged as my 'process of inquiry' progressed. When I started my research I found staff to be very positive about the college culture and style of management:

> Under the present management we can be innovative and this is welcomed with 'go for it'. We don't feel we're for it if things go wrong; we're encouraged to try. (Le Gallais, 2001a, p. 13)

However, following the completion of my first research brief for the college about a year later, I realised that the college culture portrayed to me initially was in fact multi-faceted and the 'vacant frames' (Schutz, 1976, p. 111) I was attempting to fill overflowed with conflicting perspectives. Had the culture of the college changed or were staff now more open with me as they grew to trust my integrity?

I was aware that the time spent within the college had drawn me into many of the 'taken for granted' assumptions of the in-group of construction lecturers potentially leading to Hong and Duff's (2002, p. 194) 'restricted vision'. However, as noted previously with reference to Waveridge School, I also realised that the term 'in-group' was inaccurate; it should have been 'in-groups'. I was now interacting with at least two very disparate groups of people. One key group comprised the management of the college. In my first year at Riverford my research involved close liaison with the management team. On moving to another site such contact was more infrequent. A second key group, the construction lecturers with whom I had worked on my first college brief, were also the research participants involved in my Ph.D. studies (Le Gallais, 2006). Such proximity in terms of shared time and space led to an increase in trust and enhanced rapport (Hockey, 1993). The challenge for me was to realise that this was occurring and to ensure that such 'overrapport' (Hong & Duff, 2002, p. 194) did not endanger the sharpness of my insights regarding this group. Ironically, my efforts to resist the nemesis of 'overrapport' imperilled my relationship with the lecturers who felt that – their research usefulness over – I no longer needed to spend time with them (Le Gallais, 2006). Having constructed my research relationships with care, I felt regret at leaving the field in this fashion (Bloor & Wood, 2006).

A question of degree

Reflecting upon my past research led me to reassess my understanding of the concept of insider/outsider research. My confident assertion of insider status at Waveridge School was based upon

my working there and my being a mentor. Yet my role as a senior manager created a wedge between my professed identification with the other mentors and the realities of the situation. Interactions with staff and students were on a very different basis for me in terms of the power my position gave me to challenge and change things.

Similarly, having been involved in education weakened my claim to absolute outsiderness at the college. My appreciation of the role of the lecturer/educator enabled me to relate to the various participants with empathy (Hockey, 1993) and a level of shared understanding. My own ICT vulnerability also forged a link with lecturers anxious about how the multimedia delivery of their subject might impact upon their professional identity. My position as a senior manager at Waveridge School gave me insights into Riverford management's perspective.

On a personal note, it was not until I drew up a set of research continua that I realised to what extent my own background paralleled that of the construction lecturers with whom I had conducted most of my research. Like them I had come from working class stock and had entered the middle-class profession of teaching. Having also had to adapt to the new habitus of a middle class environment, I felt able to:

> … relate to their confusion as to what they are and where they belong. I appreciate their vulnerability with the 'academic' part of their role and their sensitivity with regard to their educational background. … In working with them they have often commented that I understand their situation and that I 'can talk to them in their language' (Long et al., 2003). (Research journal, Le Gallais, 2006)

Achieving this partial insiderness was beneficial since my awareness of the setting and context of the research arena increased my 'credibility' with the respondents (Robson, 2002, p. 540). However, when the construction lecturers began to refer to me as 'our researcher' it signified an important turning point both for the management's perception of my 'outsiderness' and for me and my research. I undertook a critical examination of 'the terms of (my) engagement with the tasks of research and writing' in order to retain and make explicit 'a reflexive awareness of (my) own authorial practices' (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 146).

Part 2: from reflection to action

Writing this article has encouraged me to formalise a process of critical reflection in terms of identifying and challenging existing assumptions and attitudes with a view to changing my professional practice as a researcher (Harrison, Lawson, & Wortley, 2005). This process required reflection on events and experiences prior to my actions, reflection in-action and on-action (Schon, 1991) I was aided in this process through the use of a range of reflective tools, namely:

- The autobiography.
- The research journal/'reflective learning journal' (Shepherd, 2006, p. 333).
- Insider/outsider continua (Tables 1 and 2).
- Attitudes, attributes and identity table (Table 3).

The autobiography

> There is a growing acceptance among those involved in qualitative data analysis that some biographical details about the researcher warrant inclusion as part of the analysis, thus allowing the writer to explore the ways in which he or she feels personal experiences and values might influence matters. … The analysis of qualitative research data calls for a reflexive account by the researcher concerning the researcher's self and its impact on the research. (Denscombe, 2000, p. 212)

McGrath (2004) similarly recommends the writing of a brief autobiography to heighten researchers' awareness of how past experiences, class, values and beliefs and educational background influence their research. Long et al's (2003) use of autobiographical narrative to facilitate reflection concerning their roles as working class women in academe stimulated my own reflections about the impact of my working class background, my gender and my own experiences with regard to the issues which arose in the course of my research. This systematic process enabled me to appreciate my ambivalence as to where I 'fit' socially (Skeggs, 2004) and my empathy with those who failed in the literate culture that dominated my own schooling (Young, 1975). The extracts below, taken from my autobiographical notes have been selected to offer the reader a 'reflexive account… concerning (my)self and its impact on (my) research' (Denscombe, 2000, p. 212):

> I was brought up on a council estate… I loved school and enjoyed popularity as a very happy child. However, the day I passed the 11+ my life changed completely. My friends of more than six years (who had all failed) ostracised me totally for my academic success. This experience destroyed both my confidence and self-esteem. The social divisions at the grammar school did nothing to help in this respect with the vast majority of students coming from middle class owner occupied housing stock…[5]

> … I experienced a strong sense of feeling at home amongst the construction lecturers who were stepping outside of their social box and creating a new reality for themselves. These lecturers also came from working class backgrounds. … Now they are professional lecturers but when asked what they call themselves the majority answer 'brickie' or 'chippie', not 'lecturer'. Few still socialise with their ex-trades colleagues but they do not seem to have found a replacement social group… they do not identify fully with their 'new' social status as a professional teacher… (Le Gallais, 2006)

Writing such notes enabled me to be more reflexive with regard to my research at Riverford College. I could now better understand the empathy I sensed with the construction lecturers. Their working class backgrounds coupled with their belief that they did not really 'belong' in the academic world bore similarities with my own experiences. The loss of their former working class colleagues as they moved into the academic world of the college mirrored my own early loss of social links.

Furthermore, my previous experiences of management cultures at Waveridge School meant that, whilst initially I was highly impressed with what appeared to be a very empowering management style at Riverford College, as examples emerged of behaviour more akin to a web/role culture, my own past histories of Waveridge's authoritarian regime came to mind (see *The Research Journal*, 2 March 2003 (Le Gallais, 2006)). Noting such moments in my research journal 'may not have made me more objective (but it did) provide an opportunity for me to be much more aware of the factors which influenced me, and, therefore, by implication my research' (Glaze, 2002, p. 161).

The research journal

As with Shepherd's (2006) double-loop learning journal, my Ph.D. research journal enabled me to revisit experiences and reflect upon their influence upon my actions and interpretations. Finding my initial perceptions of the culture at Riverford College challenged by events is one such example:

> 12-06-02: Looking back at some of my earlier notes about to Riverford is a bit of a shock. In 2000 people were saying that the College had a 'can do' culture and that you could try anything and were not blamed if it went wrong. Now I am warned about the questions I ask; I'm even warned not to wear red because the Principal doesn't like it! It is difficult to marry up these two perspectives of the

same place. Has the culture changed? Or were people only saying what they felt was safe to say or what they thought I – or the management – wanted to hear? … (Le Gallais, 2006)

The journal heightened my awareness of my progress from outsider to insider researcher and challenged me to be reflexively vigilant. In the thick of the research process it is all too easy for seemingly insignificant events to slip by unacknowledged. Often their true significance is only realised with hindsight. Writing a journal of flow of life moments offers the researcher the chance to reflect upon events in tranquillity. The journal extracts below offer insights into this process:

22-11-02: Following the Principal's post inspection talk I now share some history with the staff. I now have a short cut language to express feelings and share in-jokes, which would mean nothing to others… *I find myself saying 'we' here and there and having to adjust my thoughts.* I have 'lived' with this group of lecturers for over a year. I have been welcomed and treated with respect and humour. They have trusted me in sharing concerns and sometimes contentious thoughts. I have seen how they work day in day out. I see them with their students and I listen to them talk about their classes. I cannot accept the negative verdict of the Principal…

02-03-03: Old sins have long shadows and the emotions aroused by the management's actions trigger memories of the experiences I had in my previous job where the politics of a few controlled the culture of the school to the detriment of all. It reinforces for me that one can never approach any situation totally free of the influence of previous experiences…

Insider/outsider research continua

Hellawell (2006) recommends the creation of a series of researcher continua which can facilitate an exploration of the fluid nature of a researcher's stance in the field. My first continuum, Table 1, sets out in very general terms the issues surrounding insider/outsider research in educational settings (Le Gallais, 2006). This enabled me to appreciate how ones research stance can fluctuate and shift. I have set out extracts from this continuum below.

The second continuum, Table 2, offers a timeline of my own movement along an insider/outsider scale. Perceived movement on the continuum is evidenced through reflections made in my research journal (Le Gallais, 2006) and in research papers (Le Gallais, 2003) concerning my final few months at Waveridge and the three years I spent at Riverford College. Being perceived by research participants at Waveridge to be moving towards outsiderness proved beneficial to my research since my positional power was waning and they felt more confident about expressing themselves openly. The situation at Riverford was more opaque in that my move towards insiderness enhanced my researcher rapport with the construction lecturers but endangered my

Table 1. An insider/outsider researcher continuum.

Position on the continuum	Potential benefits and pitfalls
Peer to the respondents.	Potential for achieving in-depth empathetic access to and interpretation of data. … Danger of over-familiarity, risk of researcher bias…
Known to and knowing the respondents.	Potential for enhanced rapport and ability to assess veracity of data…
Knowledge of the research arena, in this case, the FE sector.	Enables respondent to feel that the context of FE is appreciated. Caveat is to avoid presumptions – FE colleges vary considerably…
Knowledge of the world of education….	Enables the researcher to appreciate educational issues such as managerialism… But some presumptions may be made about FE due to a general knowledge of education…

Table 2.   Evidence of changing stance on time-line continuum.

1999–2000	Extract from *Strangely native* (Le Gallais, 2003): I was well acquainted with Waveridge School, its ethos and culture, its systems and formal structures. In fact I was a participant within this culture… I found staff becoming more open as they perceived how my year's secondment was serving to distance me from the internal politics of the school and from my managerial power base.
2000–2001	Extract from *Strangely native* (Le Gallais, 2003): My outsider stance at Riverford College offered insights into the staff perspective which were accepted by management because I was an outsider; it heightened the management's awareness of the need for staff's professional and personal development to be supported. The findings also reinforced the importance of involving staff and 'taking them with us' into new ventures…
2002–2003	Research journal extracts: Seeing the impact of management decisions on the staff with whom I interact each day is making it increasing harder to remain totally detached…The management is not able to see the living out of their decisions in the way I can simply by being there…
2003–2004	Research journal extracts: My initial research indicated a very open and supportive environment and it has been a shock to find out how serious things are from the point of view of control through fear and a blame culture…But here's the rub – are injustices only now occurring or is it my gradual inclusion into the in-group, which informs my version of the 'truth'? …

perceived 'objectivity' which the college management considered essential for the validity of any research undertaken. For myself, time spent in the field brought with it challenges to my initial perceptions of the college's culture and its values.

Drawing up table 3 enabled me to compare what I believed to be key areas regarding my own attitudes, attributes, identity and experiences with those of my research participants. This table

Table 3.   Attitudes, attributes and identity table: insider/outsider positioning in two research locations.

Factors identified for exploration	Insider researcher @ Waveridge?	Waveridge teacher/ mentors	Outsider researcher @ Riverford?	Riverford construction lecturers
Gender	Female	Male/female	Female	Male
Family background	Working class	Working/middle class	Working class	Working class
Professional class	Middle class (professional status)	Middle class (professional & social status)	Middle class (professional status)	Describe themselves as working class
Status in organisation	Senior hierarchy	Middle hierarchy	'floating'	'Know their place'
Type of Qualifications.	Academic	Academic	Academic	Vocational
Motivation to teach/mentor	Altruistic	Altruistic (+instrumental)	Did not teach - values about education 'seep' out	Altruistic – pass on the knowledge + holistic approach to teaching.
Attitude to ICT	n/a	n/a	ICT reticent – vulnerable	'What's a mouse?' – panic!
Points of reference	Inside the school/ education	Inside the school/ education	Outside the college/ inside education	Most outside + trades

shows that where I assumed total insiderness at Waveridge School, there was the important matter of positional power. My assumption of absolute outsiderness at Riverford is challenged by the similarities in terms of class, ICT vulnerability and professional values. Examining such issues more systematically clarified for me where my own experiences, assumptions, beliefs and values might impinge upon my understanding and analysis of the research data (Le Gallais, 2006).

Concluding thoughts

I have sought through this article to trace how I moved from an initially two-dimensional view of insider/outsider positioning to an acceptance that there is a fluidity about the research stance which should be embraced for the richness of insights it offers. Claims of insiderness based upon varying degrees of participation in, awareness of and familiarity with the culture and the ethos of the research arena and the beliefs and values of the research participants are open to contention in terms of the *degree* of shared understandings of identity with regard to status, previous experiences, etc. (see my reflections about Waveridge School). Similarly those who believe themselves to be outsiders are likely to find some 'insider' understanding or appreciation of the situation under investigation (see Table 1). This exploration of insider/outsider research has led not only to a greater appreciation on my part of the research participants' perspectives and life stories; I have also found myself critically examining my own past and present histories, my own beliefs and values, and my own professional and social identity.

The tools I employed helped me to appreciate how shared meanings and ready-made recipes arise not only from the research arena but also from the experiences, beliefs and values of both researcher and research participants. The interaction between the researcher and the research is affected by the degree of his/her identification with the location and the participants and their experiences both past and present. It was not until I sought to understand why I felt such empathy with the construction lecturers that I began to explore the links with my own past experiences. This helped me to acknowledge my impact as a researcher upon the research arena, the research participants and upon my interpretation of the data.

Utilising the tools outlined in Part 2 has enabled me to be systematic in this critical analysis of my professional practice. The research journal, my autobiographical notes, the research continua and the identity table have each played a part in giving both depth and direction to my reflections on my role as an insider/outsider researcher. My aspiration, expressed at the start of this paper, was that the sharing of this personal research journey with all its 'blockages and breakthroughs and… messiness' (Conteh et al., 2006, p. xxiii) might support and encourage new researchers to try out similar strategies to enhance their reflective practice and increase their reflexive awareness. I would welcome feedback concerning this article from fellow researchers seeking to develop their own methodological skills.

Notes

1. The names of the school and the college featured in this article have been changed for reasons of anonymity and confidentiality.
2. There are of course issues with the use of the term 'in-group' which infers that all the members of a group or collection of people possess the same views, values and perspectives. This issue is explored in greater depth elsewhere in this article.
3. As used by Schutz (1976) the term 'in-group' seems to imply an unwarranted homogeneity and fails to take full account of the layered multiplicity of any group when examined in sufficient depth. For example, my own 'in-group' of mentors differed from myself and each other in terms of age, gender, experience, values, attitudes and positional power. Such differences became increasingly apparent as my research developed and I began to appreciate the partial nature of my insiderness.

4. The reader will note the now anachronistic use of solely masculine pronouns, et cetera, by Schutz (1976).
5. In the case of these autobiographical notes, the two continua and the identity table the dotted lines serve to reinforce the fact that these are extracts from the originals and are not presented here in their entirety.

Notes on contributor

Tricia Le Gallais worked for many years in secondary education before taking up her present post at Birmingham City University. In 2000 she took up a research post at an FE college. In 2004 she was appointed to a research post at Birmingham City University where she has the additional role of Senior Lecturer (PGCE/PCE). Her research projects to date span education, business and industry. Tricia was awarded her PhD in May 2006. Her thesis, *Constructing Identities in FE: a case study of vocational lecturers*, explores the impact of change upon a group of construction lecturers in terms of their occupational, social and professional identities. In September 2007 Tricia received The BERA Dissertation Award 2007 for the best PhD dissertation awarded by a British university in 2006 to a member of the association.

References

Bartunek, J., & Louis, M. (1996). *Insider/outsider team research.* London: Sage.
Bloor, M., & Wood, F. (2006). *Key words in qualitative methods.* London: Sage.
Brannick, T., & Coghlan, D. (2007). In defence of being 'native': The case for insider academic research. *Organisational Research Methods, 10,* 59–74. Retrieved January 31, 2007, from http://orm.sage-pub.com/cgi/reprint/10/1/59.
Conteh, J., Gregory, E., Kearney, C., & Mor-Sommerfield, A. (2006). *On writing educational ethnographies: The art of collusion.* Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.
Denscombe, M. (2000). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects.* Buckingham: Open University Press.
Glaze, J. (2002). Ph.D. study and the use of a reflective diary: A dialogue with self. *Reflective Practice, 3*(2), 153–166.
Handy, C. (1999). *Understanding organisations.* London: Penguin Books.
Harrison, J.K., Lawson, T., & Wortley, A. (2005). Mentoring the beginning teacher: Developing professional autonomy through critical reflection on practice. *Reflective Practice, 6*(3), 419–441.
Haw, K.F. (1996). Exploring the educational experiences of Muslim girls: Tales told to tourists – should the white researcher stay at home? *British Educational Research Journal, 22*(3), 319–330.
Hellawell, D. (2006). Inside-out: Analysis of the insider-outsider concept as a heuristic device to develop reflexivity in students doing qualitative research. *Teaching in Higher Education, 11*(4), 483–494.
Hockey, J. (1993). Research methods: Researching peers and familiar settings. *Research Papers in Education, 8*(2), 199–225.
Hong, L., & Duff, R.W. (2002). Modulated participant-observation: Managing the dilemma of distance in field research. *Field Methods, 14*(2), 190–196.
Jenkins, R. (2000). Categorisation: Identity, social process and epistemology. *Current Sociology, 43*(3), 7–25.
Le Gallais, T. (2000). *The principle-centred mentor.* Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Central England, Birmingham.
Le Gallais, T. (2001a). Innovative construction training. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education, 6*(3), 285–304.
Le Gallais, T. (2001b). *Delivering the construction curriculum through the medium of ICT: Staff and student perspectives.* Unpublished research paper, Riverford College.
Le Gallais, T.A. (2003). *Strangely native? An exploration of a researcher's journey from familiar settings into the strange world of FE.* LSDA National Conference, Warwick University, December. Retrieved July 21, 2004, from www.lsda.org.uk/files/lsda/lsrn2003/TrackedSession2_Day2/TriciaLeGallais_abstractpaper.pdf.
Le Gallais, T.A. (2006). *Building identities in FE: A case study of construction lecturers.* Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Central England, Birmingham.
Long, M.L., Jenkins, G.R., & Bracken, S. (2003). Impostors in the *Sacred Grove*: Working class women in the academe. *The Qualitative Report.* Retrieved June 9, 2003, from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR5-3/long.html.

McGrath, J. (2004). *Leading in a managerialist paradigm: A survey of perceptions within a faculty of education.* Unpublished thesis for Doctor of Education, The University of Birmingham.

Merton, R.K. (1972). Insiders and outsiders: A chapter in the society of knowledge. *The American Journal of Sociology, 78*(1), 9–47.

Miller, J., & Glassner, B. (1997). The 'inside' and the 'outside': Finding realities in interviews. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice.* London: Sage.

Morse, J.M. (1998). Designing funded qualitative research. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Robson, J. (2002). *Real world research.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Scahill, J.H. (2005). Meaning-construction and habitus. Retrieved December 9, 2005, from http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-Yearbook/93_docs/SCAHILL.HTM.

Schon, D.A. (1991). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action.* New York: Basic Books.

Schopflin, G. (2001). *The construction of identity.* Paper presented at the Osterreichischer Wissenschaft-stag Conference.

Schutz, A. (1976). The stranger. In G. Bowker, & J. Carrier (Eds.), *Race and ethnic relations.* London: Hutchison.

Senge, P.M. (1998). *The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization.* London: Random House.

Shepherd, M. (2006). Using a learning journal to improve reflective practice: A journey of personal and professional self-discovery. *Reflective Practice, 7*(3), 333–348.

Skeggs, B. (2004). *Class, self, culture.* London: Routledge.

Viskovic, A., & Robson, J. (2001). Community and identity: Experiences and dilemmas of vocational teachers in post-school contexts. *Journal of In-Service Education, 27*(2), 221–236.

Young, M.F.D. (1975). *Knowledge and control: New directions for the sociology of education.* London: Collier-Macmillan.