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This is not just a book for people researching religion, it is a book for anyone who is engaging in research. We usually do not hear about the times that research goes wrong, and it often does go wrong in so many different ways. This is a refreshingly honest book with thirty-two examples of how research has not quite gone as planned and how different researchers have dealt with this conundrum. Seven of these chapters in particular resonated with me.

Helen Cameron's chapter engages with the messiness of conducting action research among faith organisations. Just like any organisation trying to conduct research within them can be tricky to manage, your priorities are not going to be their priorities. Their expectations are not your expectations. This worked example shows how this can be navigated, not always easily or successfully, but in the end leading to new findings that add to our understanding.

Rahmanara Chowdhury explores a research project where she was an insider researcher. This is often a difficult tightrope to walk, and Chowdhury acknowledges the critiques that are often laid at the door of those engaging in insider research. The honesty about the positives and negatives of being an insider researcher are explored, and Chowdhury makes a compelling case for the advantages and additional dimension that insider research can bring. This chapter is usefully read alongside Andrew Sayer's chapter on an outsider's perspective.

Abby Day explores the issues that arise when conducting longitudinal studies where a researcher returns to re-interview the same participant(s). She points that as the researcher you take your own memories of the previous interview with you when you reinterview and you may not hear how the participant has moved on in the intervening period. Day refers to the participant as becoming 'frozen in time' to the researcher. The degree of self-awareness that is necessary in engaging in this research is explored.

Nicola Made and Peter J. Hemming present how they dealt with putting together an online questionnaire for completion by teenagers. They discuss how they developed

their questions to capture religious identity and provide useful insights into the development of the language used within the questionnaire, recognising the importance of being able to effectively engage with their participants. This is an excellent insight into using a questionnaire to access complex understandings among a particular age group.

Peter Nynas and Johnny Langstedt explore the pitfalls of engaging in international research. As they point out international research is usually seen as positive as it enables access to more universally applicable results, access to different funding, and, dare we say it, more publishable research papers. This positive perception often leads people into international collaboration without an understanding of the potential issues, such as the different political contexts within which research questions are asked that, although not an issue in one country may well be problematic in another. This chapter should be read by anyone thinking of engaging in international research to raise their awareness of considerations they need to make.

Melanie Prideaux presents a research project that failed. She argues that as researchers we need to be more open about our failures (the focus of this book) because of the learning that comes from this and how that can go onto developing yourself as a researcher with a better understanding of the process. I found this chapter to be uplifting in its honesty and demonstration of the understanding of the positive aspects of failure.

Paul Weller tackles the thorny issue of who pays for research. He uses two funded projects, one by government and one by a research council as examples. He discusses how the set terms of a research contract with a funder shape a project and how contractual and legal constraints can come into play. This is an area of research that is not often discussed, and it is a helpful chapter to see within this volume.

Depending on your own research plans you will find benefit from dipping into this volume to read the chapters that are relevant to your planned research, but everyone should read the introduction, *Ten Common Messes in Researching Religion*. This introduction provides useful tips for interviews, ensuring informed consent, to falling out with your research team. Valuable insights for any researchers whatever the stage of their journey, those starting out can be forewarned and those of us who have been researching for a number of years can knowingly nod along to the examples given.

You think you know your research destination, but the joy of research can be in the journey and ending up somewhere different with a new knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon and having learned a lot on the way, something this book presents in all the chapters.

References

Woodhead, L., Cadman, L., & Graham, N. (2025). *Messy Methods in Researching Religion*. Oxford University Press.

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