

Chapter 4: The Role of Interpretation

Glossary:

‘Empathic’ interpretation: interpretation with the aim of getting closer to the research participants experience and meanings contained within data; engaging with what presents itself.

Hermeneutics: A more formal term for interpretation, hermeneutics is the ‘art of interpretation’.

Interpretation: Finding meaning in something, engaging with and making sense of things

Phenomenological orientations: aiming to obtain and produce knowledge about the subjective experience of research participants and the quality and texture of experiences

Realist orientations: aiming to obtain an accurate picture of the social world; aiming to generate valid and reliable knowledge about reality which exists independently of the researcher

Reflexivity: the practice by which researchers reflect upon their own standpoint in relation to the phenomenon they are studying and attempt to identify the ways in which such a standpoint has shaped the research process and findings.

Social constructionist orientations: aiming to explore the social construction of ‘knowledge’ itself and how people construct versions of reality through the use of language; investigating the process of constructing knowledge about a phenomenon and often involving the study of discourses

‘Suspicious’ interpretation: interpretation with the aim of uncovering hidden truths and latent meanings, attempting to find out what is really going on.