

## **Chapter 8: Phenomenological methods**

### **Glossary**

**Abstraction:** a process to aid the clustering of emergent themes; putting 'like with like' to create a higher-level theme (after Smith et al 2009)

**Epoché:** a phase of contemplation that requires the suspension of presupposition and assumptions, judgements and interpretations to become fully aware of what is actually before us.

**Essences:** that which gives phenomena their unique characteristics; knowledge about essences would be free from the common-sense notions, scientific explanations and other interpretations or abstractions that characterize most other forms of understanding.

**Hermeneutic cycle:** (after Schleiermacher 1998): understanding requires a circular movement from presupposition to interpretation and back again

**Hermeneutics:** A more formal term for interpretation, hermeneutics is the 'art of interpretation'.

**Homogenous:** referring to participants who share an experience of a particular condition, event or situation.

**Idiographic approaches:** a sustained engagement with individual cases; insights are produced by an intensive and detailed engagement with individual cases.

**Imaginative variation:** a phase of contemplation that involves an attempt to access the structural components of the phenomenon under investigation; asking 'how' the experience of a phenomenon is made possible.

**Intentionality:** the appearance of an object as a perceptual phenomenon varies depending on the perceiver's location and context, angle of perception and the perceiver's mental orientation; intentionality allows objects to appear as phenomena.

**Interpretative phenomenological analysis:** a version of the phenomenological method that accepts the impossibility of gaining direct access to research participants' life worlds; any research that aims to explore participant's experience must necessarily implicate the researcher's own view of the world, as well as the nature of the interaction between researcher and researched.

**Interpretative phenomenology:** an approach which aims to gain a better understanding of the nature and quality of phenomena as they present themselves but which does not separate out description and interpretation; draws on the hermeneutic tradition and posits that all description constitutes a form of interpretation.

**Linguistic comments:** a form of labelling and analysis that aims to capture the language used by participants and its potential significance (after Smith et al 2009).

**Numeration:** a process to aid the clustering of emergent themes; noting the frequency with which emergent themes appear (after Smith et al 2009).

**Phenomenological reduction:** a phase of contemplation, which involves describing phenomenon that presents itself in its totality, including aspects of form and texture as well as experiential features.

**Phenomenological psychology:** concerned with the diversity and variability of human experience; not so concerned with the identification of 'essences'

**Phenomenology:** a perspective that is interested in the world as it is experienced by human beings within particular contexts and at particular times; phenomenology is concerned with the phenomena that appear to our consciousness as we engage with the world around us.

**Polarization:** a process to aid the clustering of emergent themes; identifying emergent themes which constitute opposite ends of a continuum (after Smith et al 2009).

**Purposive sampling:** a form of sampling technique; participants are selected according to criteria of relevance to the research question.

**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.

**Relativist ontology:** a philosophical position; a view that there is no such thing as 'pure experience'; not concerned with the 'truth' or 'falsity' of perceptions of events, but rather the *experience* of such events.

**Subsumption:** a process to aid the clustering of emergent themes; realising that an emergent theme can subsume other emergent themes (after Smith et al 2009).

**Symbolic interactionist perspective:** 'the world' is a product of human participation and negotiation; social realities are negotiated by human actors and peoples' interpretations of events shape their consequences.

**Themes:** labels that capture the characteristics of a particular section of a text; conceptual titles that capture something about the essential quality of what is represented by the text.

**Transcendental phenomenology:** a philosophical system of thought; a perspective concerned with the world as it presents itself to us as humans; its aim is to return to things themselves as they appear to us, by bracketing that which we (think) we already know about them