

Chapter 1: Conceptual Preparation

Glossary

Abduction: a claim, insight or idea about reality which has emerged, perhaps unexpectedly, by engaging within reflection and which goes beyond existing available theory

'Big Q' qualitative research: refers to open-ended, inductive research methodologies that are concerned with theory generation and the exploration of meanings

Critical language awareness: an aspect of reflexivity which involves acknowledging and considering how the words used to describe experiences play a part in the construction of the meanings that are attached to those experiences; considering how language constructs versions of reality.

Critical realism: an epistemological position, holds that phenomena, experiences and events are generated/made possible by underlying structures and mechanisms; however the relationship between them is complex and not immediately transparent or visible

Deduction: a claim about reality which is inferred based on a particular premise, theory or hypothesis

Empirical: is a descriptive term referring to research involving the collection and analysis of data

Empiricism: closely related to positivism; sense perception provides the basis for knowledge acquisition; knowledge is acquired through the systematic collection and classification of observations.

Empiricist: refers to the attitude that all knowledge claims must be grounded in data

Epistemology: the branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge; epistemology involves thinking critically about the nature of knowledge itself, the scope of knowledge, knowledge claims and their validity and reliability.

Epistemological position: a view on what can be known and how it can be known

Epistemological reflexivity: the process by which a researcher reflects on the assumptions (about the world, about knowledge) that have been made during the course of their research

Extreme relativism: an epistemological position; a rejection of such concepts as 'truth', 'objective knowledge' and potentially the concept of 'knowledge' itself.

Falsification: A process that is part of hypothetio-deductivism which involves disconfirming and rejecting ideas and finding out which claims are not true.

Hypothetico-deductivism: a theory of knowledge which provides a model for conducting research to test theories using hypotheses. Hypotheses are typically tested utilising experiments or observations with the aim of rejecting the theory being tested or retaining it for the time being.

Idealist ontology: a position which views phenomenon as separate and independent from underlying material structures

Induction: Typically the process of developing theoretical ideas from a series of observations with the aim of ascertaining underlying laws or rules.

‘Little q’ qualitative research: refers to the incorporation of non-numerical data collection techniques into hypothetico-deductive research designs.

Materialist ontology: a position that foregrounds the role of underlying structures, for example socioeconomic relations, in governing and creating ‘reality’, experiences and events

Methodology: ‘a general approach to studying research topics’ (Silverman 1993:1)

Naive realism: an epistemological position akin to positivism; our knowledge of reality can approach an ‘objective’ knowledge

Ontology: a branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of the world, reality and what there is to ‘know’

Open systems: where conditions continuously develop and interact with one another to give rise to a process of ongoing change

Paradigm: a particular conceptual framework

Personal reflexivity: the process of reflecting upon the ways in which a researchers own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped their research

Positivism: an epistemological position; positivism suggests a straightforward relationship between ‘reality’ and our perception of that reality.

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.

Relativism: an epistemological position; a view that there is no such thing as ‘pure experience’ and that the aim of research ought to be an exploration of the ways in which cultural and discursive resources are used in order to construct different versions of an experience or reality

Social constructionism: an epistemological position; focusing on how human experience, including perception, is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically; perception and experience are not viewed as direct reflections of environmental conditions; there are

multiple knowledges rather than 'knowledge' and the role of language is an important aspect of socially constructed knowledge.

Verification: testing theoretical ideas with the hope of obtaining categorical laws or rules