

Seminar 5 – Phenomenology, the Insider/Outsider Issue and Reflexivity

Purpose of the week

This week introduces phenomenology and then looks at issues of 'insider/outsider' (emic/etic positions) in research including the ultimate insider position of reflexivity. We explore the position of the researcher along the insider/outsider continuum and the concepts of 'researcher near' and 'researcher distant'.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the key philosophical concept of this module, underpinning such issues as reflexivity and the insider-outsider debate. This is not to say that you must take a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology, like any other research methodology or model of consciousness, can be critiqued; it is only a model. However, phenomenology's theories and modes of working pervade much qualitative methodology and it is therefore essential that you understand them. Phenomenology's core concepts are simple to grasp, although much, if not most, of the academic literature is dense and obscure, and almost deliberately phrased so that phenomenological principles appear more complex than they are. Nick Campion's weekly notes should provide the clarity to help you make sense of the reading.

Much of the literature on the practical application of phenomenology relates to phenomenological approaches to the study of religion. This does not mean that our subject area, in this MA, is the study of religion, only that we use material from other subject areas that may give us a perspective on our own subject which, being a new discipline, suffers from a lack of dedicated academic material.

Tasks for the week:

- Watch the lecture by Dr Jack Hunter on Phenomenology
- Watch the lecture by Dr Dawn Collins on Insider-Outsider Perspectives
- Read this week's discussion paper.
- Engage with the week's required reading and begin to explore the topics for this week in the light of Assignment 1.

Discussion paper for this week:

Blain, J. 2000. 'Speaking Shamanistically: Seidr, Academia and Rationality'. In *DISKUS* Volume 6 (2000). This paper can be found at: <http://jbasr.com/basr/diskus/diskus1-6/blain.txt> (accessed checked 7 January 2022). It is given in plain text format so you may want to cut and paste it into a Word document.

A Note on this Week's Reading

Do not worry if you do not have time to read all this week's reading. Rather, the intention is to give you (1) an introduction to the subject and (b) a resource should you need or want to go deeper into the subject. Chapter 1 of Nick Campion's thesis, Bernadette Brady's thesis and Alie Bird's thesis all give you examples of how they have addressed the issue in their doctoral research. Alie Bird's first two chapters are a part of the required reading for the week.

Required Reading:

Theory:

Hennink, M. M., Hutter, I. & Bailey, A. *Qualitative Research Methods* (Los Angeles; London: SAGE, 2011/2020). Chapter 2.

Hufford, David J., 'The Scholarly Voice and the Personal Voice: Reflexivity in Belief Studies', in *Western Folklore*, 1995, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 57-76. JSTOR.

Dermot Moran and Mooney (editors), *The Phenomenology Reader*, pp 1-26 (on Moodle).

Haynes, Kathryn, *Reflexivity in Qualitative Research* (on Moodle).

Practice:

Bird, Alison, 'Astrology in Education: An Ethnography', DPhil Thesis, University of Sussex, 2006. Chapters 1 and 2. This is available in the MA CAA Online Library.

Campion, N. (2004). *Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement: the Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology*. PhD, Bath Spa University College. Available in the MA CAA Online Library. Chapter 1, p. 7-15 is where he explores the methodology he adopted for his research and within this section he explores the role of phenomenology in his project.

York, M. 'Insider/Outsider Methodological Problems with the Study of Astrology'. British Association for the Study of Religion 50th Anniversary Conference, 13-16 September 2004 Oxford. PDF on Moodle page.