

The Ethics of Understanding: Selecting a Research Methodology in Social Sciences

Research in the social sciences has always held significant importance, as it deals with people and culture. While traditional research ethics emphasise procedural safeguards such as informed consent and confidentiality, these measures alone are insufficient to address the deeper moral challenges embedded in the act of meaning-making. Building on hermeneutic traditions, this chapter advances the concepts of *ethical hermeneutics*, which frames interpretation not as a purely technical or analytical process but as a procedure entangled with subjectivity, power, and responsibility.

Interpretations are complex to be neutral, as these are mediated by the researcher's assumptions, real-time experience and the broader socio-cultural context in which the research has taken place. Accordingly, ethical strategies such as reflexive journaling, dialogical validation, ethical transparency, and contextual grounding are proposed as applications of cultivating an *ethics of understanding*. These strategies help researchers remain accountable, recognise bias, and correctly represent participants' voices.

This chapter demonstrates how ethical reflexivity strengthens methodological rigour while also ensuring fairness, care, and responsibility. It calls for a shared attitude of understanding, accepting the fact that one can never be neutral, but still requires humility, honesty, and accountability in how people interact with others. This thinking approach transcends individual disciplines and considers ethical interpretation not as an optional, but as the foundation of fair and reliable scholarship. In Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. E. (Eds.). (2023). Authors have argued that each act of representation is also an act of constructing meaning since choices about narrative, emphasis, and framing can never be completely neutral.

I. Introduction:

The prominent domains of the social sciences employ various methods to collect data, with surveys being the most widely used. The first thing to understand is why a methodology is necessary and the significance of adhering to a methodology for conducting research in any sector, including the social sciences. Let's consider the typical phases of the research process. The first step is to understand and identify the existing gap in a particular field, and then to generate the hypotheses.

In the social sciences, the hypothesis most commonly begins with a null hypothesis, and later, the data is collected and interpreted to determine whether the data supports the hypothesis or its opposite. The generic cycle of research methods involves identifying a gap, finding a solution, and validating the results achieved by completing the research method. In social sciences, a researcher always starts with an Interpretation and representation in research that is not a neutral endeavour; instead, it's fundamentally ethical. Conventional ethical protocols, including obtaining informed consent and anonymising data, are essential yet inadequate. They guarantee adherence to procedures but fail to confront the nuanced, persistent ethical dilemmas that emerge when researchers convert lived experiences into

academic texts, models, or algorithms. In this case, the moral issue extends beyond epistemology: how can researchers demonstrate knowledge in ways that respect complexity and honour participants while remaining responsible to larger groups?

This chapter examines the ethical implications of various research methodologies commonly employed in the social sciences. While considerable attention is given to research design and methodology, it will be argued that the process of interpreting data, constructing meaning, and extending conclusions should be an ethically charged effort. Furthermore, it advocates for ethical hermeneutics and the moral responsibility researchers bear when they write and engage with meaning-making in both qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. Moreover, it will include a discussion on how the interpretation is never free from subjectivity. Instead, understanding is always reconciled by assumptions, context, and human experience. It will emphasise the ethical approach that enhances the credibility and legitimacy of research findings, particularly in text-based research within the field of social sciences.

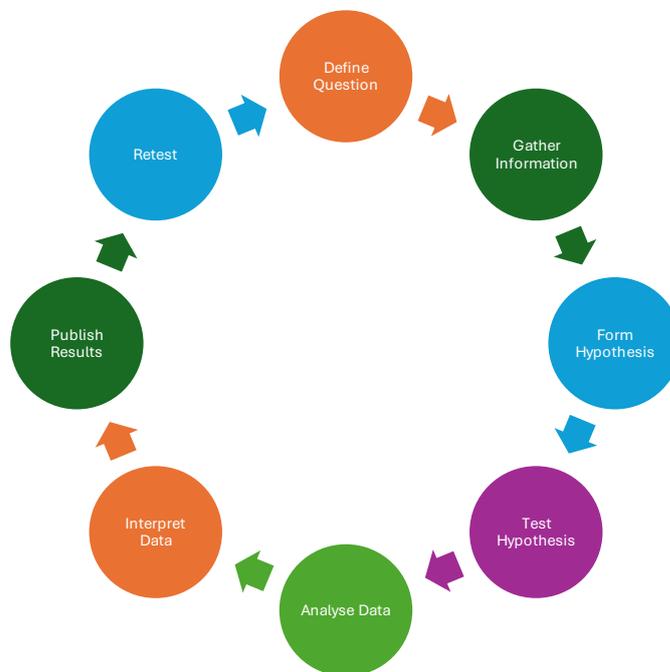


Figure 01: Generic structure of Research Method

Motivation:

Conducting research always places the initial focus on selecting data and determining whether a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approach is appropriate. However, apart from the selection of methodology, there is a very often overlooked concern: how is meaning derived from this data? What ethical responsibilities does the researcher hold when it comes to the interpretation of data? These concerns become crucial when interpretation involves vulnerable populations, complex sociocultural dynamics, or challenging truth claims.

Hermeneutics is a philosophical tradition which is more concerned with interpretation and meaning. It provides the essential tools to assess the layers of meaning-making in research. However, typical hermeneutics must include ethical scrutiny, which is here referred to as ethical hermeneutics. This chapter further discusses the meaning in research and the fact that meaning-making is not just a technical process, but it is a highly ethical act. Whether coding, qualitative interviews, interpreting survey results, or applying statistical models, researchers always apply an interpretive lens that is shaped by their own assumptions, values, and social positioning.

Examining the hermeneutics relationship to research interpretations, and to investigate the interpretive choices that enhance the representation and validity necessary for research ethics. Moreover, a discussion will be held on how these moral concerns are addressed in various methodologies, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches. Ultimately, it will provide the best and most practical strategies that researchers can adopt to produce a more reflexive and ethical interpretive perspective.

Additionally, selecting the correct research method is crucial because all phenomena depend on an accurate and efficient research approach. Considering the ethical consequences of various research methodologies prevalent in the social sciences, research design and methodology heavily rely on the interpretation of data, the construction of meaning, and the formulation of conclusions, which should be approached as an ethically significant endeavour. According to Reamer (2013), the core issues with social work values and ethics include the value base of the social work profession, ethical dilemmas in social work, ethical decision-making, and ethics risk management. According to Van den Hoonaard (2023);

“Seeking a Research-Ethics Covenant in the Social Sciences demonstrates the failure of current ethics codes to serve as meaningful tools for researchers in the social sciences. Many, especially researchers in the social sciences, find that this failure has had a disordering and disorienting effect on their research as a result of policy makers inappropriately imposing the “order” of biomedical research upon the social sciences.”

This highlights a persistent rigidity between universalised and the nuanced realities of social science research. Unlike biomedical research, social science research often engage with dynamic, relational, and contextual phenomena where rigid procedural ethics can hinder rather than protect. As it suggests that the imposition of biomedical standards risks reducing the ethical practice rather than fostering reflexivity and accountability in the field. Moreover, ethical hermeneutics and the ethical obligations researchers must uphold while writing and participating in meaning-making across qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. It also discusses how interpretation is never entirely objective. Instead, assumptions, context, and human experience always help us understand. It emphasises the ethical approach, which enhances the credibility and validity of research results, particularly in scientific studies that involve textual analysis. Situated knowledges offer a robust framework. The ethical strategies are methodological commitments instead of strict techniques. Each of these approaches helps to address the moral challenges that arise with representing others, and together they construct a framework for promoting honesty, humility, and responsibility in the process of establishing knowledge.

II. Leading Research:

The process of research in social science is different from other fields of science as it is more about using people to find patterns as described by Abbott and McKinney (2013). Science holds its own importance because people's experiences are not random but rather based on established facts. Our social location shapes the way one perceives and interprets events, i.e. the position within the social order, evaluated by factors such as class, gender, education, politics and religion. As a result of which any two individuals observing the same event may arrive at completely different conclusions each filtered through their own perspective and context. Social science offers a systematic approach to exploring and explaining these differences. The research methodology encompasses phases such as problem identification, selecting an appropriate research methodology, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation. In diverse fields, problem identification primarily entails recognising the research gap and the importance of addressing it, informed by the most recent research within the domain. The next step is to gather data correctly, which involves considering the various methods for collecting data based on the type of research being conducted and selecting the most suitable one. Surveys and secondary data are two of the most common methods for collecting data. Methodology gives structure to the process of gathering, analysing, and making sense of valuable data. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are the three primary approaches to conducting research. Each possesses unique characteristics, benefits, and applications, contingent upon the specific research problem identified. In computing, management, or the social sciences, scientific inquiry is based on methodological choices that influence how questions are posed, how data are collected, and how conclusions are drawn. The term "research methodology" encompasses not only a collection of techniques but also the fundamental logic that informs the study's design. Methodologies establish a connection between research questions, methods, and the interpretation of results.

These three methodological traditions guide scientific inquiry, each offering a distinct perspective on the examination of phenomena. The quantitative research method focuses on measurement and statistical analysis, while the qualitative research method prioritises depth and contextual understanding. Simultaneously, mixed methods aim to integrate the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, resulting in a hybrid approach.

Popular Scientific Research Areas:

In various fields of science, apart from the distinct subject matters and core foundations, they share a common commitment to rigorous inquiry in research. Among the most popular fields of research in the sciences are medicine, computing, engineering, social sciences, management, and psychology. In the field of computing, research typically involves experimentation, simulation, and evaluation of algorithms or systems. However, computing also encompasses a few human-centred areas, such as the domain of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), Artificial Intelligence, and Machine Learning, where understanding how people interact with systems and technology is crucial. In management studies, academics grapple with both organisational structures and individual agency, necessitating

methodologies that can quantify patterns while simultaneously elucidating real-world experiences. The complexity of human societies in the social sciences demands a range of methods and tools capable of capturing both sweeping social trends and the rich diversity of cultural contexts that add life to the patterns. Consequently, the choice of methodology is rarely random, as it is indicative of the problem being examined, the nature of the evidence required, and the researcher's underlying perspective on knowledge. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are the most common ways to do research. You can understand these methods like this:

III. Research Methods

1. Qualitative Research:

Qualitative research is both exploratory and interpretive. It prioritises understanding over measurement, which is about the meanings people attribute to their experiences, practices, and environments. Data can be in the form of text, images, or observations. When you analyse data, you might look for themes, code it, or make a story out of it.

Qualitative interviews and usability studies in computing reveal how people use technologies, highlighting problems, motivations, and new ways of doing things that numbers alone cannot reveal. Furthermore, in Tracy, S. J. (2024), has emphasised that case studies and interviews elucidate the influence of leadership styles on organisational culture, as well as the significance of customised initiatives in management sciences. In the field of social science, descriptive anthropology is concerned with offering a comprehensive, scientific account of human societies and cultures, encompassing their customs and traditions. Additionally, it encompasses participant observation and discourse analysis that elucidate cultural practices, social identities, and community dynamics.

Qualitative research is necessary because it can show depth, context, and complexity. It excels at generating new theories and offering innovative perspectives on processes that are difficult to measure. But its results are often limited to specific situations and may be criticised for being too general, having too few traits, or being too subjective.

2. Quantitative Research:

Quantitative research is primarily conducted in engineering and computing, where researchers typically employ analytical calculations and explanations. Based on positivist ideas, it emphasises measurement, objectivity, and repeatability. Data are numbers that are gathered through surveys, experiments, simulations, or databases. They are then analysed statistically to identify patterns, test hypotheses, or generate results.

In computing, quantitative experiments often take place in controlled settings to measure algorithm performance and efficiency, system analysis, or error rates. In management sciences, extensive surveys are executed to measure employee engagement, customer satisfaction, or market trends. Econometric analyses are employed to ascertain causal relationships in organisational behaviour and strategy. Additionally, sociologists and psychologists in the social sciences employ quantitative methods to investigate correlations

among social variables, evaluate hypotheses regarding human behaviour, and analyse national census data.

Quantitative research is strong because it is accurate, can be used to make generalisations, and can be used to test hypotheses. Statistical methods are beneficial for finding patterns in large groups of people. Quantitative studies, on the other hand, may oversimplify complex situations by reducing human experiences to numbers and variables.

3. Mixed Methods Research:

Mixed-methods research acknowledges that no single methodology can comprehensively encapsulate intricate phenomena. Researchers aim to achieve a comprehensive and profound understanding by integrating qualitative and quantitative methods and examining the synthesis of these two principal techniques. Depending on the problem that needs to be solved and the model that needs to be created to fill the gap, the designs can be sequential, concurrent, or embedded. Sequential designs are a method for transitioning between studies, for example, qualitative research followed by a quantitative survey. Concurrent designs gather both types of data simultaneously, while embedded designs combine one method with a larger framework that is primarily composed of the other.

Table 01: Comparative analysis of three research methodologies

Aspect	Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research	Mixed Methods Research
Nature of Data	Non-numeric, descriptive (words, images, narratives)	Numeric, measurable (statistics, percentages, scores)	A combination of narrative (qualitative) and numeric (quantitative) data
Interpretation Focus	Seeks to uncover meanings, experiences, perspectives, and patterns in depth	Focuses on testing hypotheses, identifying trends, relationships, and generalisations	Integrates both meaning-making and statistical analysis to provide a fuller understanding
Representation of Data	Textual descriptions, thematic analysis, coding categories, direct quotes, case studies	Tables, graphs, charts, statistical models, and regression outputs	Joint displays (merging text with numbers), side-by-side comparisons, or sequential explanatory/ exploratory representations
Level of Subjectivity	High – researcher’s interpretation influences outcomes	Low – relies on standardised tools and statistical procedures	Balanced – interpretation guided by both numerical evidence and contextual understanding
Purpose of Representation	To capture the richness, depth, and context of experiences	To provide clarity, precision, and generalisability	To combine depth with breadth for a comprehensive explanation
Significance	Deep insights into context, culture, and lived experiences	Clear, measurable, and generalisable findings	A holistic view that validates insights both statistically and contextually

Domain Specific Research:

Computing is the study of an e-learning platform that uses both statistical usage data and interviews to find out how students feel about how easy it is to use. In management sciences surveys, assessing organisational commitment may be enhanced by interviews. Additionally, national statistics on migration patterns can be contextualised through ethnographic accounts of migrant communities.

Mixed methods provide a way to gather and allow researchers to corroborate and enhance their findings through triangulation. These methods are beneficial for solving complex problems that can't be solved with just numbers or just stories. However, these studies

require a significant number of resources and necessitate knowledge of both traditions, as well as careful integration to prevent them from being compromised.

Methodological Integration and Scientific Advancement:

In the social sciences, which focus on the human condition, mixed-methods research has become increasingly important. Instead of favouring one method over another, researchers should choose methods that align with their research questions, accept complexity, and contribute to the body of knowledge. Research methodologies provide the foundational framework for constructing scientific knowledge. Qualitative research provides depth and context, whereas quantitative methods offer breadth and rigour; mixed methodologies integrate both to capture the complexity of intricate phenomena.

As sciences continue to change to meet the needs of society and new technologies, it will still be important for methods to be flexible. Researchers face the challenge not of selecting between paradigms but of utilising them judiciously, integrating qualitative and quantitative insights in ways that enhance our comprehension of the world.

IV. Introduction to Ethics and Its Significance:

This section includes how the interpretation in research is not only a methodological process but also requires ethical hermeneutics to incorporate ethical consciousness into the interpretive process, specifically in the meaning-making data analysis and the representation of findings. BAKHTADZE, I. (2015) further explores the value and meaning constructed through interpretation. In a world where education stretches well beyond borders, ethics serves as an essential compass. Irina Bakhtadze examines the importance of moral education and universal ethical norms in fostering environments where people from diverse cultures, values, and backgrounds come together, particularly within higher education. The shift in many U.S. schools away from teaching morals, leaving it instead to parents or religious institutions, resulted in poorer behaviour and academic performance, showing us that schools and universities play a pivotal role in shaping character and social responsibility.

Bakhtadze urges that globalisation demands a shared ethical foundation so that students from diverse backgrounds can engage respectfully and meaningfully with one another. Drawing on the works of classic philosophers such as Aristotle, Kant, and Mill, she demonstrates how ideas rooted in rationality, duty, and the pursuit of greater happiness help ground moral standards in education. However, she also highlights the tension between cultural relativism, which holds that each culture's morality is unique, and the humanist belief that core values such as honesty, compassion, fairness, and trustworthiness transcend cultural differences.

Interpretation in research is often viewed as a methodological step that involves organising data, identifying themes, and drawing conclusions. However, this section argues that interpretation is also an ethical act, requiring more than technical skill. It calls for *ethical hermeneutics*. It is an approach that incorporates ethical awareness into the interpretive process, particularly during the meaning-making and representation of findings. Researchers do not simply find meaning; they help create it. This construction is shaped by their own

values, assumptions, and positions of power, which significantly influence how data is understood and communicated.

Therefore, ethical interpretation is required to be reflexive. It focuses on the fact of who is being represented, how their voice is being framed, and what power dynamics are at play in that framing. Also requires sensitivity to context, more prominently when deployed on the communities that are marginalised. Misrepresentation, oversimplification, or selective quoting can reinforce harmful narratives or silence essential voices. These are the voices that refer to the situations where critical perspectives or knowledge are ignored and suppressed either intentionally or unintentionally. In research, social disclosure, or policy, the term 'silencing essential voices' refers to the lack of opportunities for people to be heard, which can distort understanding or produce incomplete knowledge.

Furthermore, interpretation involves choices that give value and significance to certain aspects of data over others. These decisions must be guided not only by analytical coherence but by a commitment to fairness, respect, and care. Thus, ethical hermeneutics ensures that research not only speaks about people, but with them, and in doing so, upholds the integrity of both the data and the researcher.

Comprehending the Meaning:

When conducting research, the first step is to select the data and determine whether a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approach is most suitable for the study. However, aside from the choice of methodology, a frequently neglected issue exists: the process of deriving meaning from data. What moral obligations does the researcher have regarding data interpretation? These issues become particularly important when interpretation involves vulnerable groups, complex social and cultural dynamics, or challenging truth claims.

Research involves more than just gathering and analysing data; it is also a profoundly moral and interpretive process. Creating meaning in research goes beyond technical procedures; it requires ethical reflection and sensitivity. How researchers engage with their subjects, interpret experiences, and represent voices all carry moral weight. Understanding research in this way underscores the responsibility researchers have not only to be methodologically sound but also to be ethically aware throughout the entire research process. Researchers consistently employ an interpretive framework influenced by their assumptions, values, and social context, whether they are conducting qualitative interviews, analysing survey data, or utilising statistical models.

Hermeneutics is a philosophical tradition primarily focused on interpretation and meaning. It offers the fundamental instruments to evaluate the layers of meaning construction in research. Nevertheless, conventional hermeneutics must encompass ethical examination, termed ethical hermeneutics.

Ethics of Comprehension and Interpretation:

In contemporary social science research, the methodological emphasis typically commences with the identification of an appropriate strategy for data collection and analysis.

Consequently, the methodology may be qualitative, quantitative, or a combination of both. In research, data collection is followed by data interpretation, which is typically regarded as a neutral procedural step rather than a critical ethical engagement. Scholars are increasingly contending that interpretation is not a value-neutral process, but a meaning-construction phase influenced by the researcher's assumptions and ethical considerations.

The goal is for interpretation to be both technical and moral. In research, all interpretations, such as identifying themes in interviews or drawing conclusions based on statistical correlations, require decisions about what constitutes evidence, who or what receives more attention, and how the overall body of knowledge is presented. These decisions also have moral implications. Interpretation is a political and ethical endeavour that delineates what is recognised as legitimate knowledge.

Additionally, the researcher investigates the notion of implicit, concealed meaning in qualitative research experiences, the interplay among diverse dynamics, and the obstacles to access. The author also examines prevalent methodological approaches that overlook the complex intersubjective dynamics of interviews and rely predominantly on transcripts. The author contends that researchers should interact not only with verbal content but also with embodied, emotional experiences via reflexive subjectivity. A model based on critical realism is suggested to enhance the interpretation of concealed meanings, highlighting the ethical and methodological significance of profound reflexivity.

Recent studies involving vulnerable populations, contested identities, or cross-cultural settings have shed light on the ethical dimensions of interpretation. In these contexts, our interpretation of data can either perpetuate or challenge the marginalisation or misrepresentation of injustice. There is a greater emphasis on in-practice ethics, which represents a shift from procedural ethics to the more nuanced, ongoing ethical decisions involved in interpreting research.

Hermeneutics can be viewed as the guiding framework to alleviate the recognised challenges. Hermeneutics is the philosophy of interpretation that elucidates the construction of meaning through discourse, context, and reflexivity. Recent literature in the field has highlighted the ethical aspects of hermeneutics, underscoring the obligation of researchers to contemplate the consequences of their interpretations of others' experiences, narratives, and actions. Interpretation encompasses not only the discovery of meaning but also the construction of meaning within moral, social, and political frameworks.

Ethics of understanding is a self-reflective, open, and context-aware way of interpreting that puts ethical responsibility front and centre at every step of the research process. It examines the interpretive choices researchers make across methodologies, the moral ramifications of those choices, and the strategies to guarantee ethical representation and legitimacy. These encompass reflexive journaling, dialogical validation, ethical transparency, and contextual grounding, all of which are increasingly acknowledged as best practices in ethical, high-quality research.

This chapter contributes to the growing body of work that challenges the false dichotomy between methodological rigour and ethical integrity. It also discusses how researchers should

view interpretation as more than just a part of the analysis process; they should see it as a place where they can be ethical and where meaning is created with responsibility and an impact on the people and communities being studied.

V. The Principles of Hermeneutic Lens:

The Hermeneutic lens is crucial for selecting the appropriate research method for the social sciences. Philosophical hermeneutics provides an essential framework for selecting research methodologies in the social sciences by emphasising the interpretive character of human comprehension. Dubinina (2019); suggests that a hermeneutic lens compels researchers to perceive methodology not as a neutral framework, but as an ethical congruence with the ways individuals construct meaning in their contexts. This viewpoint emphasises that social reality is understood through dialogue, self-awareness, and experiences within relevant contexts. Consequently, research design must embody the dynamic and relational nature of meaning-making, prioritising methodologies that are reflexive, contextually attuned, and receptive to the co-construction of knowledge. Fundamental principles, including the hermeneutic circle, intersubjectivity, and the interpretive function of the researcher, demand a methodology that transcends mere data extraction to interact with it as a pre-existing, historically contextualised phenomenon. By incorporating these principles, researchers can formulate studies that are methodologically robust and grounded in ethical comprehension.

Understanding rather than explanation:

Hermeneutics is more concerned with determining the meaning of something than explaining it. It concentrates on identifying the rationale behind actions and events within a particular context. Hermeneutics is characterised as a methodology focused on comprehending meaning rather than forming relationships. After gathering the data and obtaining the research results, the next crucial step is to interpret the data and the results accurately.

The emphasis is on analysing human behaviour, expressions, and experiences within their cultural, historical, and social frameworks. Instead of asking "what caused this?" Hermeneutics inquires, "What is the significance of this?" or "What does this mean for the people involved?". This interpretive approach aligns with the notion that understanding is more important than explanation. It tries to find the deeper meaning behind actions and events.

Gillo in his work, also noted that hermeneutics places more emphasis on the "why" than on the "what caused it," focusing on interpretive insight rather than causal inference. Drawing from philosophical traditions, including Schleiermacher's pursuit of authorial intent, Dilthey's contextualization of lived experience, and Gadamer and Heidegger's concept of understanding as a fusion of horizons, this framework emphasises interpretive depth and reflexivity. Hermeneutics does not separate the researcher from the subject; instead, it encourages an ethical and dialogical engagement with meaning, emphasising empathy, historical context, and co-constructed understanding.

Knowledge Situated in Context:

It recognises that knowledge is neither objective nor neutral; instead, it is generated within contexts by individuals who possess their own perspectives and biases. Dubinina (2019), asserts that interpretation is not a means of accessing an entirely objective reality; instead, it is mediated by the researcher's preconceptions, implicit frameworks, and prior knowledge, which influence the recognition, construction, and valuation of meaning. These pre-understandings are not mistakes to be eliminated; instead, they are essential elements of the interpretive process that necessitate critical reflection.

Gillo (2021), also emphasises that comprehension emerges from the convergence of perspectives, particularly the interplay between the researcher's interpretive framework and the participant's experiential reality. These dynamic elements emphasise that meaning is co-constructed rather than merely discovered, and that each account is inherently partial, perspectival, and contingent upon the specific conditions of its production. Acknowledging the contextual nature of knowledge contests the positivist notion of universal, context-independent truth and necessitates a clear recognition of the interpretive perspective adopted in research.

From a methodological perspective, adopting situated knowledge constitutes a fundamental commitment to epistemic integrity. It requires more than just automatic gestures toward reflexivity or context. Researchers must deeply comprehend that knowledge is inherently connected, never neutral, and constantly influenced by the interpretive frameworks that shape it.

Reflexivity evolves into a nearly constant self-examination, a perpetual inward reflection that acknowledges one's position, privileges, and blind spots are not incidental but fundamental to interpretation. Contextual grounding necessitates that researchers not only recognise the socio-cultural and historical milieu but also intricately weave their findings into this framework, rendering the research inseparable from the lived reality it aims to elucidate. Transparency necessitates profound openness, which involves the overt revelation of assumptions, value commitments, and interpretive biases, thereby exposing the framework of knowledge production to rigorous examination and scrutiny.

When these practices are deeply ingrained in methodological choices, research transcends mere procedural rigour. It becomes ethically charged, contextually saturated, and epistemologically vibrant, able to respect the inherent complexity of social reality while enhancing credibility in ways that traditional paradigms frequently deem incomprehensible.

The Circle of Hermeneutics:

The hermeneutic circle is a way to interpret something, according to it understanding is always circular. Every time one understands a piece, one must assume that it is part of a whole, and every time one knows a whole, one must assume that it is made up of pieces. The researcher's preconceptions, inherently influenced by disciplinary traditions, cultural contexts, and implicit assumptions, serve not as impediments but as fundamental forces in this dynamic interplay of meaning.

Uncertainty and Ambiguity

Hermeneutics fundamentally opposes the allure of finality. It asserts that meaning is not singular but plural, not static but dynamic. Ambiguity is not a defect to be eliminated but a creative force that expands interpretive possibilities. To engage in hermeneutics is to accept uncertainty not as a methodological flaw, but as a stringent recognition of the boundless complexity of both human and computational realities.

Ethical Responsibility:

Ethical responsibility recognises that the chosen data for research extends beyond mere raw data. But instead, it is gathered with some moral and interpretive issues in mind. This will be further substantiated by the analysis and presentation of the collected data before processing.

It will also include arguments about the moral and ethical effects of interpreting data. It also contains examples and case studies to illustrate how ethical mistakes in interpretation have rendered research less valid.

Ways to Ethically Represent in Research

Representation in research is inherently biased. In computing, management sciences, or social sciences, interpreting and presenting knowledge always has ethical implications. Decisions regarding inclusion, exclusion, and the presentation of findings transcend mere technical or stylistic considerations; they are fundamentally ethical determinations. They influence the comprehension of communities, the legitimisation of practices, and the circulation of power both within and outside the research encounter.

Formal research ethics frameworks often emphasise informed consent, confidentiality, and institutional review processes; however, these protocols do not encompass the entirety of researchers' ethical responsibilities. The more difficult problem is how knowledge is shown: how voices are heard, how contexts are kept, and how interpretations are held accountable. This challenge has become more difficult because more people are realising that researchers don't just record reality; they also help create meaning. Their viewpoints, positions, and interpretive frameworks are fundamentally connected to the knowledge they generate.

To traverse this landscape, scholars have adopted what could be described as an ethics of understanding, an approach that emphasises reflexivity, dialogue, transparency, and contextual awareness. This perspective avoids the inclination to depict research findings as universal or dispassionate. Instead, it insists on treating knowledge as contextual, relational, and ethically significant. This chapter describes four ways to put this ethics of understanding into action: reflexive journaling, dialogical validation, ethical transparency, and contextual grounding.

Strategies of Ethical Representation:

These strategies are not strict rules, but rather ways of thinking about how to do things. Each one provides researchers with a means to establish integrity, accountability, and respect,

while also enhancing the credibility and interest of the results. They collaborate to develop a framework of ethical representation that transcends disciplinary boundaries and addresses the numerous challenges posed by contemporary scholarship.

1. Reflexive Journaling: Fostering Ethical Self-Awareness:

Reflexivity has long been acknowledged as fundamental to qualitative research; however, its ethical implications often outweigh simple organisational precision. Reflexive journaling serves as a persistent reminder that researchers are not separate from their work but are profoundly intertwined with it. Journaling provides a systematic framework for examining how individual history, academic training, institutional connections, and cultural context influence the formulation of questions and the development of interpretations.

Reflexive journaling can be transformative in the field of computing research. For instance, a researcher working on natural language processing systems might keep a reflexive journal to record how their own language background influences their ideas about what constitutes "standard" or "correct" language. Such a record helps prevent the uncritical replication of biases, such as the preferential treatment of Western idioms in model design. In managerial research, reflexive journaling enables scholars to recognise how their personal experiences with organisational hierarchies may shape their interpretations of leadership styles, potentially leading them to favour hierarchical authority over more collaborative approaches. In the social sciences, a researcher examining migration may contemplate their own nationality or immigration status and the impact of these factors on participant access and narrative interpretations.

Journaling is an ethical way to keep track of one's own actions. It keeps track of the researcher's changing thoughts, including times when they were uncomfortable, realised something, or had doubts. This openness is helpful for the researcher and can also be shared with others or used as proof of reflexive engagement in publications. In this way, reflexive journaling makes ethical accountability stronger by keeping track of the conditions under which knowledge comes to light.

2. Dialogical Validation: Collaborative Knowledge Creation:

Reflexive journaling directs the researcher's focus inward, whereas dialogical validation directs it outward, towards participants and communities. This strategy reflects the belief that representation should not be the sole domain of the researcher. Instead, it views research as a collaborative effort in which everyone is seen as a co-creator of meaning.

Dialogical validation entails involving participants in continuous discussions regarding the evolving interpretations. In managerial science, this could include sharing initial findings regarding workplace culture with employees and managers, encouraging them to validate, refine, or contest the researcher's classifications. In social science research, particularly in ethnography, dialogical validation may involve member-checking practices, where participants review transcripts, thematic codes, or preliminary analyses to verify the accuracy of the findings. In computing, dialogical validation has emerged within participatory design

traditions, where end-users engage not only in testing prototypes but also in formulating interpretations and representations of technological outcomes.

The ethical significance of this practice resides in its reallocation of interpretive authority. Participants are not just "data points" that do nothing; they are active participants in creating meaning. Dialogical validation enables participants to counter misrepresentation, rectify inaccuracies, and emphasise viewpoints that the researcher may have neglected. It recognises participants as independent creators of knowledge.

There are, of course, problems with dialogical validation. It necessitates considerable time and resources, and participants may not consistently concur with the researcher's interpretations. However, these problems aren't problems; they're opportunities: they remind us that knowledge is always open to debate and has many perspectives. By considering these factors, researchers move closer to a morally sound representation.

3. Ethical Transparency: Making Interpretive Choices Apparent

People often discuss transparency when discussing data management or reproducibility, but ethical transparency takes it a step further. It demands the clear expression of the values, assumptions, and frameworks that support the research. These kinds of choices shape every project: why a dataset was chosen, why certain voices were given more importance, and why one theoretical framework was chosen over another. These choices are too often not made clear, which makes readers think that the results came directly from "the data."

In computing research, ethical transparency may entail recognising how the creation of datasets favours demographics, consequently instilling biases in machine learning models. Researchers may also discuss the business or institutional interests that influence design choices. In managerial research, transparency may encompass the examination of how participant access, frequently facilitated by gatekeepers, such as senior executives, affects the nature of insights that can be produced. In social science research, transparency may encompass positionality statements wherein researchers reveal how their social identities and theoretical commitments shape interpretations.

Ethical transparency enhances credibility by allowing readers to critically evaluate the circumstances surrounding the generation of knowledge. More importantly, it shows respect by letting the audience know not only what conclusions were reached but also how they were reached. Ethical transparency, therefore, opposes the complication of interpretive labour and represents a mode of scholarly integrity that enhances trust among researchers, participants, and readers.

4. Contextual Grounding: Resisting Abstraction

Contextual grounding ensures that results aren't taken out of context, which would deprive them of their meaning. In disciplines that seek to generalise, knowledge is often presented without its context, as if it were universal. However, this kind of abstraction could erase the very things that shape phenomena, potentially leading to misrepresentation and ethical distortion.

The ethical foundation of interpretation is grounded in context. It means situating participants' voices, behaviours, and experiences within the cultural, historical, social, and political landscapes that shape them. Ethical representation is impossible without attention to context; stripped of it, meaning becomes distorted or even harmful. This strategy urges researchers to move beyond surface-level description and dive into the nuanced conditions that influence meaning-making.

When it comes to computers, workplace monitoring algorithms are often judged solely on their effectiveness, rather than their impact on other aspects, such as labour exploitation, privacy loss, and various cultural views on work. If one doesn't think about the context, one might see these technologies as neutral tools, when in fact they can make the differences that already exist worse. In management research, studies on leadership often portray Western models as universally applicable, overlooking the unique historical and cultural factors that shape them. To understand the model, consider the time it was created, the location where it was made, and the industry for which it was designed. In the social sciences, placing research within its proper context helps to prevent the erasure of the histories of marginalised communities. It ensures that their problems aren't viewed in isolation, but in relation to broader issues such as racism, colonialism, or poverty. From an ethical perspective, contextualising information serves as a reminder that its sources consistently shape it and can never attain absolute completeness. This method contradicts the notion that complex situations can be distilled into "best practices" or universal frameworks. Instead, it illustrates how events and environments interact with one another. This leads to interpretations that are both more accurate and fairer.

Building a Common Ethics of Comprehension:

Reflexive journaling, dialogical validation, ethical transparency, and contextual grounding are all strategies that can be employed independently. Their true ethical strength, however, is in how they work together. Reflexive journaling helps us remember where we are; dialogical validation takes power away from one interpreter; ethical transparency makes the research process open to questioning; and contextual grounding keeps findings linked to real-life experiences. When combined, they form a more comprehensive and responsible way to represent others.

This integrated ethics of understanding is crucial in places where people from different fields work together. In computing, where technical systems often outpace moral thought, these strategies provide designers and analysts with a means to ensure that ethical accountability is integrated into their work. In managerial sciences, they mitigate the pursuit of universal "best practices" by emphasising power dynamics, voice, and contextual factors. In the social sciences, they build on long-standing traditions of reflexivity and contextual analysis, while placing greater emphasis on the moral importance of these approaches.

Table 02: Comparative table that synthesises the four strategies for ethical representation

Strategy	Core Idea	Application in Research	Strengths	Limitations / Challenges	Distinctive Contribution
Reflexive Journaling	Ongoing self-examination of	Maintain a reflexive journal or	Builds trust and accountability,	Time-intensive; requires vulnerability	Makes visible the researcher's

	the researcher's role, assumptions, and impact.	positionality statement to document feelings, decisions, and biases throughout the research process.	enhances self-awareness, helps manage emotional responses, and prevents unconscious bias.	and honesty; may not be easily integrated into quantitative traditions.	influence on knowledge production, turning subjectivity into an ethical asset.
Dialogical Validation	Co-construction of meaning through participant feedback and dialogue.	Use member checks, collaborative design, or participant feedback loops to validate interpretations and ensure accuracy.	Ensures participants' voices are respected; prevents misrepresentation; empowers participants; fosters richer data.	It may be logistically challenging; participants may disagree with the interpretations; and risks may overburden them.	Shifts research from "on" participants to "with" participants, emphasising mutual respect and shared meaning-making.
Ethical Transparency	Clear documentation of methods, decisions, and interpretive frameworks.	Provide explicit accounts of methodological choices, reasoning, and interpretive processes in publications.	Enhances credibility and reproducibility, builds trust with participants and readers, and prevents hidden assumptions.	Requires careful reporting; space limitations in publications may restrict detail; risks of making research appear overly rigid.	Makes the interpretive process visible, showing how meaning was created rather than leaving it implicit.
Contextual Grounding	Situating participants' experiences within cultural, social, historical, and political contexts.	Analyse data in light of broader systemic and contextual influences; avoid universalising or decontextualising voices.	Strengthens the validity of findings; prevents distortion or harm; honours the integrity of participants' lived realities.	Requires deep contextual knowledge; risk of overgeneralization if context is misinterpreted; demands sensitivity to complexity.	Anchors interpretation ethically in participants' realities, ensuring representation is both accurate and respectful.

Fundamental Ethical Dilemmas in Social Science Methodology:

1. *Who speaks and who is spoken for? Representation and voice*

Representation is an interpretive act that may lead to appropriation if the researcher co-opts or recontextualises participants' voices. Ethical practice necessitates authentic collaborative constructions of narrative.

In her thought-provoking essay, Bernadette Baker explores a complex but essential question: *How can everyone's voice be included fairly in academic reviews, especially in education?* Rather than offering a simple answer, she delves into the deeper issues behind the question itself, such as what we even mean by "voice" and who gets to be heard or recognised in scholarly spaces.

Academic reviews often shape what counts as valid knowledge in a field, so the way they're written can either include or silence different perspectives. Baker argues that terms like "voice," "identity," and "representation" are often taken for granted, as if they naturally reflect who someone is or to which group they belong. But she shows that these ideas are shaped by history, power, and culture.

Using the ideas of philosopher Michel Foucault, she suggests that reviews don't just present neutral truth; they also help shape what is seen as truth and whose knowledge is valued. Rather than looking for a one-size-fits-all solution, Baker strives to ask better questions. Instead of just asking *how* to include more voices, we should also be asking *who* is speaking, *how* they're recognised, and *why* certain voices are heard over others.

2. Power and Positionality in Research Relationships:

The social and institutional positioning of researchers fundamentally influences interactions and interpretations. Being critically reflexive helps one strike a balance between empathy and awareness of these power dynamics.

In *Critical Social Research as a 'Site of Resistance'*, Clarke, Chadwick, and Williams reflect on how power and positionality shape relationships within critical research. They argue that academic work must go beyond observing from the sidelines and instead become actively involved in challenging injustice. This requires researchers to be deeply reflexive and constantly examine their own social positions, privileges, and relationships to both marginalised communities and powerful institutions. The authors emphasise that research relationships are never neutral. Power operates in every interaction, and academics must be mindful not to reproduce the very systems of exclusion they aim to critique. This form of research resists dominant narratives by valuing lived experience and challenging the silencing of opposition.

Rather than pretending to be objective outsiders, the authors advocate for an “interventionist” approach, one that acknowledges partiality, supports collective struggle, and amplifies the voices of those who have been historically ignored. Ultimately, positionality is not a weakness to overcome but a vital lens for understanding and confronting how power circulates in and through research itself.

3. Interpretation and Misinterpretation:

Frameworks and biases are part of interpretation. To reduce misrepresentation, researchers must consistently validate interpretations through participant involvement and self-examination.

In the social sciences, interpretation is about more than just analysing data; it's about trying to understand people's lives, experiences, and perspectives. But doing that comes with real ethical challenges. Researchers don't just enter the field as neutral observers; they bring their own backgrounds, beliefs, and biases. These can shape how they understand what people say and do, and sometimes, that can lead to misinterpretation. When researchers misinterpret someone's story or experience, even unintentionally, the consequences can be severe. It can mean reinforcing stereotypes, misunderstanding a community's needs, or telling a story that doesn't truly belong to them. This is especially risky when working with groups who are already marginalised or misrepresented.

That's why ethics in interpretation matters so much. Social researchers have a responsibility to reflect on their role, to question their own assumptions, and to work with, not just about, the people they're studying. It's about listening closely, being honest about uncertainty, and respecting complexity.

At its core, ethical interpretation is about doing justice to the people behind the data. It means being careful not to speak over others and recognising that the way we tell stories in research can shape how people are seen and how they're treated in the real world.

4. Ambiguity, Uncertainty, and the Facade of Neutrality:

Haraway's critique of the "view from nowhere" reminds us that claims to neutrality often conceal underlying positionality. Ethically responsible research recognises ambiguity and rejects overall declarations. In social research, ambiguity and uncertainty are not just challenges; they are unavoidable realities. Human behaviour is complex, shaped by shifting identities, social norms, and power dynamics. No matter how carefully a study is designed, researchers inevitably face moments where meaning is unclear, data contradict themselves, or interpretations pull in multiple directions. Embracing this uncertainty is part of honest scholarship.

Yet, within academic and policy circles, there's often pressure to present findings as clear, objective, and conclusive. This gives rise to the facade of neutrality, the idea that researchers can (and should) remain detached and unbiased observers. But neutrality is not only impossible; it can also be harmful. Claiming to be neutral often masks the values, assumptions, and positionality embedded in the research process. It can allow dominant perspectives to pass as "universal truths" while silencing others.

Acknowledging ambiguity and uncertainty does not weaken research instead it strengthens it. It invites critical reflection and transparency. It reminds us that knowledge is always situated and shaped by context. Rather than striving for an impossible neutrality, researchers have an ethical responsibility to be transparent about their position, acknowledge complexity, and remain accountable for how their interpretations influence understanding, policy, and the lives of people.

5. Being responsible for participants, disciplines, and the public:

Researchers owe it to several groups: participants (for honesty and respect), disciplines (for methodological rigour), and the public (for clarity and relevance). It is morally problematic to address these issues simultaneously.

Social researchers carry a responsibility that extends far beyond data collection. They are accountable to the people they work with, the academic disciplines to which they contribute, and the broader public whose findings they may impact. This responsibility begins with participants ensuring their dignity, safety, and voices are respected throughout the research process. Especially when working with vulnerable or marginalised groups, researchers must prioritise consent, confidentiality, and representation, being careful not to exploit or misinterpret the lived experiences of those they study.

Responsibility to the discipline means maintaining integrity, transparency, and critical reflexivity. Researchers help shape the body of knowledge others rely on, so their methods and conclusions must be robust, honest, and ethically grounded. This also involves challenging

harmful traditions and biases within the field itself and contributing to more inclusive and reflective scholarship.

Eventually, researchers carry a responsibility to the public, as social science research is never isolated from the world; it can shape policies, influence narratives, and directly impact people's lives. Being responsible means communicating findings clearly, acknowledging limitations, and being mindful of how research can be used or misused. Ultimately, ethical research involves holding space for complexity, being transparent about intentions, and remaining accountable to all those whose lives and understandings it touches.

VI. Ethics of Data and Interpretation as Ethical Responsibility:

This section includes a detailed description of the fact that the selected data is not actually raw data, but it is collected through some interpretative and ethical choices. This will be further supported by the fact that the collected data is somehow analysed and presented before being processed.

It will include further arguments on the ethical and moral implications of data interpretation. This section will also include some examples/case studies to illustrate how ethical failures in interpretation have led to weak research validity.

In today's data-driven world, we often celebrate the power of data to reveal patterns, predict trends, and drive decisions. But what's frequently overlooked is the ethical responsibility that comes with interpreting data, especially when those interpretations can shape real lives and policies. Egger, Neuburger, and Mattuzzi explore this tension, reminding us that analysing data isn't just a technical task, it's a moral one.

Every decision made in the process of what data to collect, how to analyse it, and how to present the results is influenced by values, assumptions, and sometimes bias. For example, if a dataset excludes certain voices or reinforces stereotypes, the interpretation can unintentionally cause harm. We've already seen real-world examples of this, like biased algorithms in hiring tools or financial systems that disadvantage specific groups.

The authors emphasise that traditional ethical theories, such as acting on principle, aiming for the greatest good, or being guided by integrity, can provide helpful ways to approach these challenges. But in the fast-moving world of big data and AI, broad ethical codes aren't always enough. What's needed is a commitment to context, paying attention to who might be affected, whose voices are missing, and what harm could be done.

Ultimately, interpreting data ethically means staying mindful of the people behind the numbers. It's about more than accuracy; it's about fairness, accountability, and care. Researchers and practitioners alike must reflect on their role in shaping narratives and systems using data. Ethical interpretation isn't a one-time checklist—it's an ongoing, conscious effort to ensure that data serves society justly and respectfully.

Reflections on Comparison:

At first glance, computing, managerial science, and the social sciences might seem like distant planets in the research universe. But when it comes to ethics, these disciplines, each with its own language, culture, and tools, surprisingly orbit the same moral sun.

Computing comes equipped with code, algorithms, and a fierce commitment to transparency and precision. In this world, ethics means clarity, reproducibility, and playing fair with data. It's about doing things "by the book" and ensuring that what one builds doesn't spiral out of control or harm people along the way.

Managerial science, meanwhile, dives into the heart of power: who holds it, how it's used, and what it means to lead ethically in complex systems. Here, ethics is not just about being fair; it's about navigating influence, acknowledging the blind spots, and reflecting deeply on decisions that affect entire organisations.

Then there are the social sciences, messy, beautiful, and deeply human. Ethics here is all about people: listening to them, understanding their stories, and honouring their lived experiences. It values context, participation, and the idea that research should be done with people, not on them.

Though their methods differ, all three are grounded in shared ethical concerns: responsibility, accountability, and care. And when they meet, something powerful happens: each discipline tempers the others' weaknesses and enriches the ethical conversation with its own depth. Together, they remind us that ethical research is never a one-size-fits-all approach. It's a collective effort, grounded in both technical excellence and a deep respect for humanity.

Trustworthiness and Genuineness:

Integrity in research is not about just completing a checklist of credibility. Even long-standing frameworks such as those proposed by Guba and Lincoln still hold value today. But they gain a new depth when viewed through a more human-centred lens. In the current research landscape, trustworthiness is about honesty, openness to complexity in relationships, and an ongoing awareness of how our own presence unavoidably shapes the process.

Thick Description and Contextual Validity:

Context is not mere background detail, but it is the heart of understanding. Rich description gives research life, drawing out the textures, emotions, and lived realities of people in their actual worlds. Without which the findings risk becoming flat, abstract generalisations. With it, research gains both ethical grounding and interpretive richness, showing not just what happens but why it matters.

Strictness vs. Flexibility: The Ethical Tightrope:

Protocols provide structure, but rigidity should never be mistaken for virtue. Ethical research demands to be responsive. When unexpected challenges occur, which is very common,

flexibility is not a weakness; it's a mark of integrity. The ability to adapt thoughtfully is what keeps research both rigorous and humane.

Reflexivity: The Heartbeat of Ethical Research:

Reflexivity is not an afterthought tucked into an appendix; it is the driving force of ethical inquiry. It should shape the work at every stage, from the first scribbles of an idea to the final, polished paper. Objectivity is often an illusion, but reflexive honesty creates trust. By acknowledging our influence rather than hiding it, we give our work authenticity and depth.

The Ethics of Writing, Representation, and Voice:

Writing is never neutral; it always carries ethical weight. The way we quote or frame determines who is amplified and who is left unheard. As Richardson and St. Pierre remind us, ethical writing means 'showing the seams', making visible the process of meaning-making and allowing readers to see not just the findings, but how they were shaped.

Sharing Data Without Selling Out Participants

Open science is a noble aim, but not if it exposes vulnerable voices. Ethical researchers walk a fine line: championing transparency while fiercely protecting privacy. The goal? Openness that doesn't come at the cost of safety or dignity. Ethics and methodology are inextricable; research is not neutral; it constructs realities. Researchers fulfil their obligation to participants, disciplines, and society by anchoring practice in reflexivity, dialogue, transparency, and context, guided by humility, accountability, and hope.

Conclusion:

The chapter has argued that methodology in the social sciences, computing, and management sciences is not only a technical framework for generating data but also an ethical enterprise that shapes how knowledge is constructed, communicated, and legitimised. Too often, the ethical dimension of interpretation has been marginalised in favour of procedural safeguards that, while necessary, cannot fully address the moral complexities of representing lived realities. By foregrounding interpretation as a site of ethical responsibility, this work has called for a rethinking of what it means to conduct research with integrity.

At the centre of this rethinking lies *ethical hermeneutics*—a framework that insists interpretation is never neutral, but rather always shaped by assumptions, positionality, and context. Hermeneutics demands that researchers move beyond the search for objectivity and instead embrace reflexivity, dialogue, and transparency. It challenges the illusion of a "view from nowhere" by acknowledging that all knowledge is situated, partial, and co-constructed. Such recognition does not weaken research; rather, it strengthens its credibility by making visible the interpretive choices and value commitments underlying scholarly work.

Ethical strategies address a different facet of the interpretive process: reflexive journaling fosters self-awareness of biases and assumptions; dialogical validation redistributes authority by inviting participants into the interpretive process; ethical transparency renders

methodological choices explicit and accountable; and contextual grounding resists harmful abstraction by embedding findings in their socio-cultural realities. Together, these strategies cultivate research that is both methodologically robust and ethically accountable.

Moreover, by comparing applications across computing, management, and social sciences, the discussion has shown how ethical hermeneutics transcends disciplinary boundaries. In computing, it mitigates algorithmic bias and highlights the lived implications of technological systems. In management sciences, it illuminates power dynamics within organisations and challenges the uncritical adoption of universal models. In social sciences, it deepens engagement with lived experience, ensuring that research speaks with communities rather than about them.

Ultimately, the chapter concludes that ethical research is not achieved by rigid adherence to rules but by cultivating humility, accountability, and care throughout the research process. Interpretation must be recognised as both a technical and moral act, an act that shapes how voices are heard, how experiences are represented, and how truths are legitimised. Ethical hermeneutics therefore offers a pathway toward research that honours complexity, resists misrepresentation, and upholds responsibility to participants, disciplines, and society at large.

In a world increasingly reliant on research to guide policy, technology, and social life, the stakes of interpretation are immense. Researchers cannot afford to retreat into claims of neutrality; instead, they must embrace the ethical burden of their work as an opportunity to produce knowledge that is not only credible but also just. The future of scholarship, across fields, depends on this integrated vision of methodological rigour and ethical responsibility— a vision where understanding is inseparable from ethics, and where interpretation becomes a practice of care, humility, and shared humanity.

Ethical representation is not just about following the rules; it is an ongoing duty to participants, communities, and the public. It acknowledges that knowledge is inherently biased, and that each interpretive act influences the comprehension of individuals and practices. Researchers can create a stronger ethics of understanding by using strategies like reflexive journaling, dialogical validation, ethical transparency, and contextual grounding. This ethics of understanding honours complexity amplifies the voices of marginalised people, and fights against the erasures of abstraction.

The job is hard. It necessitates humility, transparency, and the readiness to acknowledge that knowledge is perpetually incomplete, contextual, and subject to dispute. But it is this very acknowledgement that renders research ethically significant. In an era where knowledge is becoming increasingly important in technology, government, and social life, it is not optional to represent oneself ethically; it is necessary.

An emphasis on the fact that interpretation is not a value-free process, but rather it is a form of ethical engagement with knowledge and honest representation.

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