

**Table 2.1 Ontologies and research questions**

<i>Type</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>What the research question captures</i>	<i>Aims/research questions from an example study</i>
<b>Realist/essentialist</b>	Reality is 'out there' and discoverable through the research process; people's words provide direct access to reality.	An understanding that language captures participants' experiences of reality.	Moller and Vossler's (2015) research question of 'how infidelity is defined by practitioners, and how they experience the ways their clients understand and define infidelity' fits with their ('tempered', p. 489) realist approach to analysing their interview data.
<b>Critical realist/contextualist</b>	Reality is 'out there' but access to it is always mediated by socio-cultural meanings, and, in the case of qualitative analysis, the participants' and the researcher's interpretative resources (so direct access to reality is never possible). People's words provide access to their particular version of reality; research produces interpretations of this reality.	An understanding of participants' experiences as lived realities that are produced, and exist, within broader social contexts.	Adams, McCreanor, and Braun (2013) used a critical realist perspective to explore gay men's 'explanations of health and well-being' including 'their accounts of how to improve it' within '(dominant) individualistic framings and the (alternative) social/community framings of gay men's health and well-being evident in these data' (pp. 888–889).
<b>Relativist/constructionist</b>	There is no external reality discoverable through the research process. Instead versions of reality are created in and through research. The researcher cannot look through people's words to find evidence of the psychological or social reality that sits behind them. Rather, people's words become the focus of research, and the researcher interprets how these words produce particular realities within the speaker's and hearer's culture.	An understanding that language does not simply mirror a world 'out there', but instead is used to <i>construct</i> realities, and taken for granted knowledge can – should! – be queried.	Frith's (2015) examination of the ways that 'women are instructed that the body needs to be trained to meet the requirements of a (multi) orgasmic sexual subject' (p. 318) and how orgasms are constructed, in <i>Cosmopolitan</i> magazine.