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Three Distinctions of the Heideggerian Phenomenological Research Method

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Abstract

This paper tries to explain how to perform a competent interpretive phenomenological inquiry with Heidegger's philosophy. The study examines three distinctions of Heideggerian phenomenologists while conducting phenomenological research: (1) realizing the problem of identity; (2) recognizing the inadequacy of ontology; and (3) interpreting the subject matter through historical critiques. The paper discusses the very basic issues of qualitative research, including a priori knowledge, data analysis process, and validity and creditability concerns. In conclusion, this paper suggests five essential factors for establishing a research approach to use Heideggerian phenomenological inquiry in social science and policymaking research where investigators are confronted with a wide diversity of existing and alternative worldviews.

Keywords: Heidegger, phenomenology, interpretive phenomenological inquiry, research method, qualitative

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This paper attempts to offer an attempt to explain more about phenomenological inquiry and Heidegger's phenomenological philosophy. The paper uniquely presents the three distinctions of Heideggerian thoughts in conducting interpretive phenomenological research: (1) realizing the problem of identity; (2) recognizing the inadequacy of ontology; and (3) interpreting the subject matter through critical historicity. Discussion and recommendations on conducting a proper phenomenological investigation are also provided.

Understanding philosophical standpoint of phenomenological researchers

In the literature of qualitative methodology, there are several scholarly attempts to develop procedure for phenomenological research methods which are straddles both descriptive and interpretive phenomenology (see e.g., Benner, 1994; Giorgi, 1985; Marton, 2000; Moustakas, 1994; Sanders, 1982; Smith, 2011; Van Manen, 1990). However, the two salient qualitative research methods, which have been contemporarily claimed to go align with Heideggerian approach, can be identified as interpretive phenomenology analysis (IPA), and phenomenography.

The IPA method utilizes double hermeneutic to help researchers making sense of how participants are engaged in a search for the meaning of what they experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2011, 2018, 2019; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The phenomenography method holds that individuals' conceptions occupy structural relationships to each other as well as to their environments, and offers a two-level framework what-how and referential-structural for research designs and analysis process for both quantitative and qualitative research (Feldon &

Tofel-Grehl, 2018; Marton, 1981, 1986, 2000; Marton & Booth, 1997; Marton & Pong, 2005;

Rossum & Hammer, 2010).

Understanding Heideggerian interpretive phenomenology as a research method

In this section, I trace the three foundational ideas from Heidegger's original thoughts

and guidance on phenomenology as a research method. Heidegger apparently explained the

phenomenological method clearly in his three main lectures. The first lecture in summer 1923 is

Ontology: The hermeneutics of facticity, and continued with his course *Introduction to*

phenomenological research in the winter semester 1923-1924. The last piece of the puzzle in

1957 is about Heideggerian phenomenologists' manner of thinking with *Identity and Difference*,

which is considered as the most important publication since his masterpiece *Being and Time* in

1927.

Firstly, to understand Heidegger's phenomenological inquiry method, one needs to

realize the problem of identity. Identity is not simple as the unity of a thing with itself. To

Heidegger (1969), there must be a being before all basis or ground and before all existence,

before any duality at all.

Secondly, to understand the Heidegger's interpretive phenomenological research method,

one needs to recognize the inadequacy of ontology. Heidegger (1999) posited that ontology, with

its theme is being-an-object to "form the disciplines in which the content of the objects in these

areas is drawn out as subject matter and displayed as a guide for the structural and genetic

contexts of consciousness of objects" (p. 2), blocked access to Dasein, being-in-the-world.

Thirdly, to employ the Heideggerian phenomenological inquiry method, one needs to

interpret the subject matter through historical critiques. To Heidegger (2005), it is the only way

to get to an original and primal position on the subject matter possible. Phenomenology needs to

be understood in accord with its possibility as something that is not publicly and self-evidently given.

Principles to conduct a proper phenomenological research

A priori knowledge of an interpretive phenomenological study.

Historicality is an essential aspect of phenomenology (Heidegger, 2005; Ricoeur, 1984), and through historical reference, horizons of significance are formed (Taylor, 1991). In a phenomenological study, a priori knowledge needs to be presented to produce authentic self-understanding of individuals in the research process, and to help readers judge the possible transferability to their own settings (Frechette, Bitzas, Aubry, Kilpatrick, & Lavoie-Tremblay, 2020).

Data analysis of a phenomenological inquiry.

Analyzing an interpretative phenomenology involved sense-making activities that included concept mapping (Daley, 2004), theorizing outliners and external critiques (Thorne, 2008), dismantling the practical understanding of participants with historical and philosophical texts as "a destruction, occurs by tracing concepts back to their distinctive origin" (Heidegger, 2005, p. 85). The researcher might follow the isolating thematic statement process described by Van Manen (2016), a 'selective', 'highlighting' approach to statements or phrases throughout the transcripts, so themes were identified as "structures of experience" (p. 127), or extracted statements with interpretation.

Validity and credibility of a phenomenological research.

Validity of data interpretation and findings in a qualitative research is based on the ethical standard of researchers. Recording data and daily journaling to maintain the information trail in research management helped the qualitative researchers to be confident for any authority

auditing process of validity (Carcary, 2009; Cutcliffe & McKenna, 2004). Credibility of an interpretive phenomenological study lies in the character of vividness and richness of the interpretation presented by the experience lived that can be understood by insiders and outsiders, who will see the text as a statement of the experience itself (Husserl, 1999). With the clarity on a priori knowledge constructing horizons of significance and on the role of the researcher in his or her approach to the research subject, the interpretive phenomenology also focused on meanings that arose from the interpretive interaction between the manuscript, and the readers to help readers of the final report in judging the credibility of the research (Frechette et al., 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The first and foremost step to utilize this method, researcher needs to espouse Heidegger's phenomenology philosophy, with the situatedness of humanly being-in-the-world, in which inquiry is interpretive, eliminating brackets, starting with a priori categories and ending with emerging themes (Dreyfus, 1986, 1987, 1991; Zahavi, 2019).

Secondly, as a significant criterion for the interpretive phenomenological inquiry, the researcher needs to establish a fundamental historical critique to disclose the history of the covering up of the subject matter (Heidegger, 1999, 2005).

Thirdly, the research needs to hold a conservative stance in qualitative research design that utilizes interviews with participants, field notes through direct observations, and reflexive journaling to collect and triangulate data through inductive approach as the constant comparisons (Bernard, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Glaser & Strauss, 2009).

Next, the research instrument should be the interpretive phenomenological in-depth interview. Through observation and interaction in the participants' "real-life" context,

researchers can learn how this context affects research topics, including motivations, constraints, and workarounds (Moustakas, 1994).

Lastly, multiple reading interview transcripts and notes, taking notes and comments, help to provide new insights and layers of meanings and then, coding with various themes. Those multiple themes can eventually be clustered under three or four major themes. Then, the researcher will analyze the narratives with these major themes (Charmaz, 2006; Saldana, 2013).

To sum up, Heidegger's phenomenology approach not only provides means for exploring any universal pattern and how the narrators' lives are a part of that bigger pattern (Willig & Billin, 2012) but also possibly generate "a higher level of theories and insight" (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 11) through the interpretive reflecting process of narrative voices, analytic voices and synthesis voices (Darroch & Silvers, 1982).

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