

Book Reviews

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Rehorick, D., & Bentz, V. M. (Eds.). (2017). *Expressions of phenomenological research: Consciousness and lifeworld studies*. Santa Barbara, CA: Fielding University Press. 314 pp. \$19.95 (paperback). ISBN 10:1548452009.

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This book is a compilation of eight summaries of doctoral dissertations plus introductions to phenomenology and hermeneutics by the two editors. It closes with an epilogue that offers new horizons and possibilities for these research methods. The editors' and authors' intent is to both explore a wide variety of approaches to collecting and analyzing phenomenological and hermeneutic data and describe the researcher's personal transformation that occurs when doing this sort of research. Collectively, the authors make a strong case for creative methodological alternatives within the phenomenological and hermeneutic processes. This is not the first edited book (Bentz, 2016; Rehorick and Bentz, 2008) addressing transformation of the researcher.

The audience for this book includes research students and faculty: both qualitative and quantitative methodologists. The first chapter of the book gives a clear review of the traditional phenomenological method and expands this to include a variety of ways to both collect and analyze research data. They describe the process as designed to get behind (p. 6) and between the data points to discover subjective meaning. The result can be a filling in, a broader, richer meaning often understated by numerical, verbal, and observed data. Rehorick and Bentz give a good understanding of phenomenological and hermeneutic methods, making these methods accessible to students and experienced researchers in the social sciences. Foundational contributors are represented (i.e., Husserl, Schutz, and Gadamer), as well as, some of the later authors (i.e., Merleau-Ponty, van Manen, Rehorick, and Bentz).

The book then offers eight examples/chapters written by authors who explore a wide variety of lifeworld topics from executive coaching to experience in the health-care system. The researchers here offer explanations of coming to phenomenology that it was a seemingly natural progression in their lives. The focus of these chapters is primarily on the results of the authors' research, providing a description of how the researcher used phenomenology and/or hermeneutics as their methodology. And several go into detail about the inevitable personal transformation that occurred

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as a result of experiencing the research process. Some wrote about the external transformations while others described the internal.

This edited book contributes to the research methods literature and specifically to the phenomenological and hermeneutic possibilities. It provides new understanding and new direction to the research practice, offering a way of researching the world and others in it as brand new experiences, seen with child-like eyes, using a variety of data gathering techniques and analysis methods. It provides new ways and examples of data gathering and analysis—alternative ways of knowing (p. 13) distinct from the deductive approaches common

in our western research practices. It opens up the possibility of finding ways to express insights and meaning not only from the collected data but from the transforming self of the researcher. This creates a case for the term *Leregogy* coined by Rehorick and Taylor (1995), where researcher and subjects are cocreators and transformers creating meaning (p. 27). The book also makes a strong case for acceptance of first-person research accounts where third person is the accepted tradition in most western academic circles. It makes the case for self-transformation as a by-product of the research. One comes to “be” a phenomenologist through the initial draw of the methodology, then the actual research and then noticing the differences in one’s life-world from then on. The fact that the research process inevitably transforms the researcher is described as a welcome surprise.

There has long been dialectic between quantitative and qualitative researchers about the viability of the others’ methods, questioning whether the research results are empirical enough or descriptive enough. This has resulted in a schism between the quantitative and qualitative camps and resistance to alternative methods. This book goes a long way to describe the phenomenological and hermeneutic methods so that they might be used in tandem or at least in harmony with other research methods, filling in the cracks and holes in the data, offering subjective detail that other methods cannot address. If there is a criticism of this book, it is the need to directly address this dialectic in the field.

The book includes appendices listing current websites and professional resources (p. 299). It also lists dissertation examples from the Fielding University archives (p. 303) that use or are influenced by phenomenology and/or hermeneutics. This is a wonderful innovative volume to have on the faculty shelf as well as a reference for doctoral candidates interested in exploring a qualitative approach to their research.

References

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