Trusted Advisor Relationships of Executive Women in the Corporate World: The Phenomenological Approach and Beyond

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Introduction

- Phenomenology

- Study on Executive Women and Trusted Advisors (this only requires sentence capitalization)
A Word on Phenomenology

- Human instrument in qualitative inquiry - central theme of the 9th TQR Conference
- Qualitative Inquiry (lowercase) - responsible decision making regarding the who, what, where, when, why and how of the phenomenon
- Phenomenology from Husserl to Giorgi and Moustakas
- Giorgi (2008) raised concerns about phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and generalization in descriptive qualitative reporting
Executive Women and Trusted Advisors

• According to Wasylyshyn (2015), trusted advisor relationships have become indispensable to organizations. These relationships transcend coaching and mentoring dyads.

• Such relationships may have benefitted executive women in their career building and advancement.

• Research Question: What is the lived experience of having a trusted advisor for female corporate executives?
Methodology

• Data Collection
• Data Analysis
Data Collection

- Nine executive women from male-dominated industries were interviewed by asking only the modified (still unclear on how it was modified, perhaps you should say “variation of”? Address this in paper too.) research question
  - “In your own words and with as much detail as you can, please tell me about a time in your career as a senior corporate official that you had to rely on a person or persons for advice or guidance pertaining to your work or career?”
- The prepared guiding questions were not utilized during the interview
Data Analysis

- A wealth of information
- Complete overwhelm
- Sifting through the reams of transcribed data in search of meaning units. (delete period)
Phenomenological Reduction

- Issues
- Solutions
Phenomenological Reduction - Issues

- Collected between 75 and 150 meaning units per participant
- Themes were very varied
- Individual and composite rich textural descriptions
Phenomenological Reduction – Solutions

- Sought a method to facilitate drastic data reduction
- Repeatedly revisited what constituted a meaning unit
- Narrowed clusters of meaning
- Criteria (you really only have one criterion here) for useable themes – those common to all nine participants were considered useful
- Individual and composite rich textural descriptions
Imaginative Variation

- Issues
- Solutions
Imaginative Variation - Issues

- Identify structures to vary possible meanings, perspectives, and fantasies – putting the ego back after epoche
- Created very lengthy individual and composite structural descriptions
- Structural decisions problematic and eventually opted for universal structures such as space, time, self, and self and others
- Questions regarding essence –
  - Define essence
  - Is it the common elements experienced by all nine or was it a synthesis of the typical experience as it played out for all nine women?
  - Is this the definition of essence universally held by qualitative researchers and scholars or might there be some ambiguity?
- For this study a combined distilled description was used
Imaginative Variation - Solutions

- Employed universal structures according to Moustakas – to facilitate possible meanings, perspectives, and fantasies
- Universal structures space, time, self, self and others were deemed adequate to facilitate structural descriptions
- Questions regarding essence
  - Was it the common elements experienced by all nine or was it a synthesis of the typical experience as it played out for all nine women?
- Opted for combined distilled description
Dilemmas and Lessons Learned

- Other Dilemmas
- Lessons Learned
Other Dilemmas

- Sheer volume (more than 500 pages in writing and 1200 meaning units) - Series of compromises
- Reasons for overwhelming quantity of data?
- Challenge marrying practice and theory, specifically the philosophical approach of Husserl through the Moustakas method
- Challenge to make philosophical approach relevant in a business environment
Lessons learned

- Keep the research question typed out and taped up
- Measure every meaning unit according to (it’s not really “according to,” but “as relevant to.”) the research question
- Be prepared to apply patience and read and reread and write and rewrite many times over.
- This methodology is about an in-depth connection to the phenomenon
- Question: In retrospect the question arises whether the uncovering of this type of qualitative information might have been reported more effectively in a different qualitative methodology
Might a different methodology have done more justice to the wealth of information provided in the interviews? (Didn’t you just say this on the previous slide?)

How appropriate is transcendental phenomenology for business and corporate settings?
Discussion and Questions
References


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