

Pre-Understanding—A Threat to Validity in Qualitative Caring Science Research?

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This article is devoted to reflections on how to prevent pre-understanding from influencing the research process and jeopardizing the validity of a study. Influences from preunderstanding are exemplified from empirical lifeworld-led caring science research. Finally, there is a discussion of preunderstanding as a natural attitude and therefore also an important part of the lifeworld. It is concluded that validity requires a self-critical approach. It is suggested that a descriptive analysis, where the findings are fairly close to the data, involves a less problematic approach than research, which requires special attention to pre-understanding in connection with different levels of interpretation.

Keywords: caring science; description; epistemology; interpretation; lifeworld research; pre-understanding

Creating new knowledge in qualitative caring science research requires an open attitude. But this is a challenge because every new insight is more or less rooted in existing understanding. This article discusses the impact of pre-understanding in qualitative caring science research. Special interest is devoted to reflections on

how to prevent pre-understanding from influencing the research process in a way that jeopardizes the validity of a study. The present article aims to discuss the phenomenon of pre-understanding and its impact on empirical research in caring science and various aspects of pre-understanding are reflected upon. First, pre-understanding is treated

from Hans-George Gadamer's (1997) perspective, followed by a short literature review. Next are brief reflections from previous researchers' attempts to address pre-understanding in their empirical caring science research.

The empirical examples are research from a lifeworld perspective grounded in the Nordic tradition of caring science developed by Eriksson, Dahlberg, and Martinsen (Arman et al., 2015). Influences from pre-understanding are exemplified in data collection and analysis in caring science research. With that in mind, the relationship between pre-understanding and lifeworld is discussed in terms of the natural attitude and as such, also an important part of the lifeworld. This is followed by conclusions on how the tricky issue of pre-understanding may be nuanced and managed in qualitative caring science research.

Prejudices and Pre-Understanding According to Hermeneutic Ideas

Hans-George Gadamer (1997) investigated prejudices as intentional structures that shape our understanding of almost everything we encounter in everyday life. His ideas were based on Martin Heidegger's existential philosophy, especially concerning humanity's immense skill to interpret and understand as exclusive to humankind, something that fundamentally differentiates us from other mammals (Heidegger, 1998). Yet, despite this ability, we often lack the capacity to understand in a completely new way because we are inclined to understand new phenomena by relating it to something that we already know or think that we know. When Gadamer (1997) explored the meaning of prejudices, he found that they are both necessary and inevitable for all forms of understanding. Knowledge derived from a person's tradition constitutes a horizon of understanding. The appropriation of new horizons, for example as researchers, requires that we can put our own prejudices to the test. Nevertheless, Gadamer seemed to doubt whether this was truly possible.

In qualitative caring science research, this dilemma is often referred to as pre-understanding, and it has increasingly been associated with the validity of a study. For a researcher, as for everyone else, individual pre-understanding is based on the context in which we live. Our horizons of understanding form our history of effect (*wirkungsgeschichte*). To call for reflection about this, Gadamer (1997) provided empirical researchers with his single concrete advice, which is to

endeavor to the utmost to become aware of personal history of effect and thereby diminish the risk of pre-understanding influencing the research process in an uncontrolled and unreflected way. Although Gadamer does not provide any other concrete advice for empirical research, several attempts have been made by empiricists to apply his philosophical ideas. The present article is yet another contribution to that discussion.

Pre-Understanding in Empirical Research—An Overview

The dual meaning of pre-understanding was investigated in a 20-year-old article with the title, *Pre-understanding and Openness—A Relationship Without Hope* (Nyström & Dahlberg, 2001). Examined here is pre-understanding from a cognitive, social, and psychodynamic perspective and its impact on empirical caring science research. In cognitive psychology, Piaget's theory (1980) was used to explain why we are not inclined to radically change existing pre-understanding because of fixed cognitive structures called *schema*. From a social psychological perspective, Mead (1934) claimed it is obvious that individuals from different traditions develop diverse ideas and values and perceive many basic ideas as facts, not as the opinions they actually are. This, in turn, makes them vary considerably among different cultures and traditions. From an in-depth psychodynamic perspective, Klein (1989) emphasized the importance of interpersonal relations during early childhood as a foundation for unconscious parts of our internal world. Thus, closely related persons during early childhood form a foundation for interpersonal aspects in adult life, despite no longer being accessible to consciousness. Taken together, the three perspectives described by Nyström and Dahlberg (2001) made it reasonable to believe that unreflected influences from previous interpersonal relations, culture, and tradition can be obstacles for a completely open attitude also in qualitative research.

In Sweden, the problematization of pre-understanding in empirical research was initially introduced in social science, where it included considerations about how researchers can check whether emerging findings are more consistent with the meaning of the data than the researcher's pre-understanding. These important considerations from social science was then adopted and developed within a caring science research approach called Reflective Lifeworld Research (Dahlberg et al., 2008). More than 50 years ago,

Trankell (1973) introduced concrete criteria to check validity in qualitative research, and with that in mind, he suggested that researchers should be clear about all circumstances that may influence emerging findings. Gustavsson (1996) developed Trankell's proposals further and suggested an investigation into whether there is anything in the data that directly contradicts the findings. He was inspired by Popper (1963) and his demands that researchers should actively try to falsify their findings when checking congruence with the data. Ödman's (2007) contribution is fully in line with this, but he preferred an undogmatic approach where the researcher is ready to let the studied phenomenon mean something other than expected, which, in turn, makes it important to treat pre-understanding with accuracy, caution, and self-criticism. Yet he distanced himself from recommending a more extensive description of pre-understanding because "such a thing easily leads to self-deception and beautifications of one's own person" (Ödman, 2007, p. 238).

Nevertheless, some authors claim high validity when a group of researchers with different kinds of expertise analyze together (Kornaros et al., 2018). Another attitude is to treat conscious parts of pre-understanding as something useful that can be controlled by reflections on professional experiences (cf. Hammarlund, 2009). A similar approach was suggested by Debesay et al. (2008) as a thematization of pre-understanding in the initial stage of a study. From a caring science perspective, Dahlberg (2006) suggested a completely different approach, advising researchers to hold back and slow down the process of understanding. The term *bridling* is used to refer to restraining all forms of personal beliefs, theories, and assumptions that would otherwise mislead the development of meaning (Dahlberg, 2006). According to Dahlberg, bridling covers a process of not understanding too quickly, carelessly, or slovenly. Bridling further means a reflective stance that helps to slacken the firm intentional threads (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) that tie us to the world. This means to apply an open approach by "actively hold[ing] back pre-understanding and wait[ing] for the phenomenon and its meaning to show itself" (Dahlberg, 2006). A decade later, Wijngaarden et al. (2017) added that this is not merely about bridling pre-understanding, but about our understanding as a whole, all through the researching activity. The challenge for the researcher is to find a way to continuously remain open for a new meaning to emerge (Wijngaarden et al., 2017).

However, when Lindseth and Norberg (2004) introduced phenomenological hermeneutics within caring science research, they did not seem to believe in the possibility of ignoring and freeing oneself from pre-understanding because we are only aware of aspects of it. Yet, through critical reflection, they believe that we can revise, broaden, and deepen our awareness. Such reflections can take place during discussions with other people or when reading a text, especially when persons or texts are foreign to us. Encounters with the unknown can help us become aware of the aspects of pre-understanding that we mostly take for granted.

Yet another example from caring science research pleads that it is difficult to present pre-understanding of a research phenomenon at an early stage of understanding something new. Fleming et al. (2003) proposed that researchers' opportunities to become aware of the pre-conscious aspects of pre-understanding increase during analytical work. A similar approach from caring science research seems to guide Eriksson et al. (2020) when they suggested particular regard for what is surprising during analysis in comparison with what was easy to understand, as the latter may indicate the involvement of pre-understanding.

Pre-Understanding in Qualitative Caring Science Research—Five Examples

To illustrate some ideas about the role of pre-understanding, five examples are given where pre-understanding is highlighted in caring science research. The examples are grounded in a Nordic tradition of caring science developed by Eriksson, Dahlberg, and Martinsen (Arman et al., 2015). In the Nordic tradition caring science is a human science, and views caring as a phenomenon where the patient's world in terms of the patient's perspective, vulnerability, health, wellbeing, and suffering are primary. For care to be caring relationships and dialogue are essential. From a caring science perspective, care in order to be caring is to support and strengthen patients' health processes toward improved health and well-being (Dahlberg, 2018). Dahlberg and Segesten (2010) and Galvin and Todres (2013) argue that health in terms of wellbeing is achieved when patients' health processes are strengthened and patients can fulfill their life projects, both small and large ones. Health from a lifeworld perspective involves the whole person. Health contains a sense of balance and equilibrium in relation to life and the people in close

proximity (Dahlberg, 2011; Galvin & Todres, 2011). From a lifeworld perspective, care should therefore be focused on the individual person's uniqueness beyond just medical signs and symptoms, illness and diagnosis in order to strengthen their health processes and enabling wellbeing (Todres et al., 2014). The significance of the lifeworld and existential issues in caring science research has also been highlighted by Palmér et al. (2021) as a guide to perform and enable caring and caring didactics. A lifeworld perspective and existential philosophy has influenced the development of caring science into the concept of existential caring science as a research area for research on existential and meaning-oriented phenomena in a caring context (Palmér et al., 2021). With the above described foundation of caring science in mind, we will now elaborate further on the role of pre-understanding, five examples are given where pre-understanding is highlighted in caring science research.

In the first empirical example, Gadamer's ideas on pre-understanding are used to develop new ways of collecting data from young children by using play (Gadamer, 1997). In the subsequent two examples, Gadamer's advice not to prematurely anticipate the meaning of a research phenomenon is considered (Gadamer, 1997). In the last two examples, pre-understanding initially obscures the meaning of data, and it takes some time before the "otherness of the data" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 269) becomes visible. Because a large part of pre-understanding is personal, each contribution is followed by reflections on what may have guided the main researcher in the example.

The first example describes data collection in research about the meaning of needle procedures in pediatric care from the perspective of children ages 3–7 years (Karlsson et al., 2016a, 2016b). The study was conducted with a lifeworld–hermeneutic approach. When designing the research, the main researcher knew that interviewing small children can be difficult. General questions can be problematic because young children often require concrete questions to give adequate responses. Yet an open introductory question was tried because the participating children varied in age and degree of maturity. After a blood test or an injection, the children were asked, "How did you experience the needle stick?" This question served well as an introductory question for some children, and they answered in a way that enabled individual follow-up questions. But as expected, this was not possible for all children, many of whom replied along the lines of "I don't know."

In caring science research, it can be important not to exclude data from persons who cannot provide complete answers, and in this case, it was important to also get information about how very small children experience needle procedures. When a young child is unable to provide verbal data, the risk easily arises that the researcher might try to help the child with leading questions based on their own pre-understanding of how children usually react. In that case, there is the obvious risk that the child tries to answer as expected. To avoid gambling with children's tendency to try to satisfy an adult's expectations, the main researcher in this study reformulated questions to see if the children maintained similar answers.

However, that trick did not always work, either, so the researcher needed to use another approach. The main researcher decided to make use of young children's fantasy and magical thinking and finally managed to access small children's reality through play. To encourage them to share stories about needle procedures, a *secret bag* with various dolls and toys was used. Playing helped the children show what they meant when verbal statements were not fully understood by the researcher.

Reflections: The main researcher, who performed all data collection in this study, is a pediatric nurse. In that role, the researcher had many times helped young children deal with frightening and painful care situations. But in the research, that kind of pre-understanding was not effective. Data were needed for the study, so when verbal answers were not adequate, the researcher put professional pre-understanding aside and applied Gadamer's ideas about play (Gadamer, 1997).

The second example was retrieved from an observational study that was followed up on with individual questions. The study was based on phenomenology, with the aim to highlight nurses' experiences of older patients' participation in team meetings (Lindberg et al., 2013). As a participant observer, the main researcher needed both total attention to the research phenomenon and a disciplined approach to the common tendency of all human beings to anticipate meaning (Gadamer, 1997). In the present example, the researcher started data collection with observations from team meetings with elderly patients and their caregivers. At one of those meetings, a staff nurse paid attention to an elderly woman's tears and moved closer to put an arm around her. When the woman was interviewed shortly afterward, she did not spontaneously mention anything about being

sad. Therefore, she was asked a concrete question about this particular incident.

Thus, the researcher encouraged the woman to interpret the situation herself and applied an open approach rather than pre-understanding. The woman was given the opportunity to explain that she in fact felt very happy and her tears were due to the fact she was grateful.

Reflections: The main researcher in this study was a nurse with specialization in intensive care. Thus, unlike the examples above, the researcher was not professionally rooted in the context of the study. This may have made it easy for the researcher to refrain from anticipating the meaning of the research phenomenon for the benefit of a genuine question. When being asked about the meaning of her tears, the woman was encouraged to understand herself, and she could explain that her tears were based on feelings other than sadness. For the study, she gave nuance to the meaning of tears by describing them as a sign of gratitude.

The third example is a phenomenological study that aimed to develop a didactic method with the theory of the lifeworld as a basis for learning (Ekebergh, 2009). The researcher's pre-understanding was that students have difficulty understanding theoretical knowledge and its significance for concrete care, and the researcher was therefore curious about what group tutoring means for students' learning. However, the analysis of interviews conducted after group supervision revealed something else. It turned out that the reflection itself was central to students' learning and not only to understanding theoretical knowledge and how it can be used in meetings with patients. The students highlighted that they had learned to reflect and how it had affected them in terms beyond learning, encompassing their entire existence. This meant that they had begun to reflect in all contexts in life, both in care and in private life. It had affected both their learning and their whole existence.

Reflections: This researcher has significant experience from doctoral education and lifeworld didactics and knew from both research and professional experience that the meaning of a phenomenon may turn out to be something other than anticipated. In this example, pre-understanding was quickly reachable for active reflection, which almost immediately made the students' reflections an a-ha experience. By refraining from trying to anticipate the meaning of reflection (Gadamer, 1997), this aspect of pre-understanding

was clarified, and a new meaning emerged that, in turn, became yet another part of the lifeworld didactics.

The fourth example is retrieved from a single case study on breastfeeding difficulties (Palmér et al., 2014) based on a lifeworld-hermeneutic approach. In the present abbreviated version, the case is called Anna. She was first interviewed a couple of weeks after giving birth, and breastfeeding was immediately difficult for her. The infant was screaming and not latching onto the breast properly. Anna disliked both breastfeeding and her own body. She even hated the milk that flowed from her breasts and thought that breastfeeding was the worst thing she had ever done. In a follow-up interview a couple of years later, Anna said that her initial problems became better after some months, and the infant began breastfeeding well. She continued to breastfeed for almost a year despite disliking it the entire time.

The main researcher was confused by the fact that Anna had not stopped breastfeeding much earlier and found it increasingly difficult to understand the meaning of her suffering. After the first interview, it appeared reasonable to search for biological reasons for Anna's difficulties, because they seemed to be enormous. So why did she not stop breastfeeding earlier? Also confusing was that Anna's aversion to breastfeeding did not disappear when the problems disappeared.

In the struggle to understand something that seemed contradictory, the main researcher began to think about whether pre-understanding was an obstacle for understanding the meaning of Anna's suffering. This approach turned direct analysis in a different direction, toward what was different vis-à-vis pre-understanding. More attention was now turned to those statements where Anna expressed anger. She was especially angry about the traditional expectancy that a good mother should breastfeed. This did initially not make sense because Anna continued to breastfeed and managed it well. She was fulfilling all requirements that she perceived as expectations from those around her but was not happy about it.

Gradually, the researcher began to understand that Anna used her anger to protect herself. She prescribed other people a critical and demanding attitude and, thereby, projected her own imagined imperfection as something that other people experienced. Therefore, it was important to prove them wrong by continuing to breastfeed much longer than they would have expected.

Reflections: The main researcher in this study was a midwife specialized in breastfeeding. Professional experience and research in the field meant that the researcher possessed an expertise and knew most things that could make breastfeeding problematic. In this case study, based on two interviews at fairly long intervals, the researcher found that pre-understanding in the shape of professional expertise was for quite some time an obstacle to understanding unexpected reasons for breastfeeding difficulties. Anna's problems are probably a bit unusual and are therefore the very meaning of what Gadamer (1997) called the *otherness*. Anna seemed to be a woman with an existential vulnerability that was expressed during a challenging period of life through aversion to breastfeeding, which remained even when breastfeeding started to work well.

The **fifth example** is a brief excerpt from a research project at an emergency care unit that had for quite some time been receiving complaints about inadequate responses to caring needs. This project had a lifeworld-hermeneutic approach and was conducted from three perspectives: Patients, relatives, and nurses (Nyström, 2003). When nurses were interviewed about how they perceived the conditions for providing good care, almost everyone complained about management, especially their work schedules. The researcher, who had previously interviewed both patients and relatives, knew that this emergency care unit was mostly criticized about their inadequate response to caring needs. Therefore, the researcher initially thought that the nurses' complaints originated in something other than work schedules.

It was not until more than a year later, when the nurses were finally allowed to schedule themselves and the caring attitude simultaneously improved quite a bit, that it became clear the researcher had been looking for something in the data that was not there. That discovery caused the researcher to go through the interview data once again with a more open approach to what the nurses had actually said. The researcher made an effort to find something other than what was in pre-understanding that had guided the first review of the data, where the researcher sought a deeper explanation. Now it became possible to see a more profound meaning of not being allowed to influence one's own work schedule. It seemed to be a matter of not being involved and allowed to influence at all. The initial poor treatment of the patients was interpreted in light of this as a parallel process to management's unwillingness to

listen to nurses' requests to gain influence over own working conditions.

Reflections: The researcher in this study was a psychiatric nurse with a particular interest in psychoanalytic theory. When the interviews were preliminarily analyzed, the researcher almost immediately tried to read between the lines, wishing to discover something that the interviewed nurses themselves were unaware of. In that way, what the nurses actually said was ignored. It was not until care improved that the researcher could see the otherness (Gadamer, 1997) in the data, meaning discovering what had not been expected initially.

Discussion

In the five examples from empirical caring science research above, all of the researchers were aware that pre-understanding could play a role despite efforts toward an open approach in both data collection and analysis. In the first example (Karlsson et al., 2016), the main researcher foresaw problems when interviewing young children and was inclined to vary methods of data collection to become individually compliant with each child. The researcher was inspired by Gadamer's ideas on the meaning of play for seriously interacting with a child. During data collection in the second example, the main researcher (Lindberg et al., 2013) discovered the double meaning of tears by refraining from anticipating their meaning when tears fell from an older women's eyes during a team meeting. An open-ended question produced rich findings. In the third example, the researcher (Ekebergh, 2009) had extensive experience helping students apply caring science in nursing practice. When observing group supervision, the researcher assumed that reflection was, first of all, an important tool in supervision. When the field notes were analyzed, it became clear that students had taken a step back and begun reflect on the reflection itself. It was indeed not only a tool for learning! The researcher realized the importance of avoiding anticipation of the meaning of reflection and was positively surprised by this deepening of a research area that the researcher had already mastered quite a bit.

Analysis of data seems to entail an even greater risk of uncontrolled influence from pre-understanding. When initial attempts to interpret do not seem completely congruent with data, as in the two last examples (Nyström, 2003; Palmér et al., 2014), the researchers considered if their

preliminary analytical ideas were images of their own pre-understanding. By clarifying their anticipations of the meaning of data (Gadamer, 1997) and then trying to see the otherness (Gadamer, 1997), it became possible to interpret and understand that which was not initially obvious.

Gadamer's (1997) focus on pre-understanding as a guide to understanding our everyday lives is based on lifeworld theory as a given basis of all experience. Before Gadamer, Heidegger (1998) philosophically explored the pre-structures of understanding and introduced the idea that understanding is not a simple tool to resort to when needed. It is linked to our existence by referring to the past and future, as well as to the actual. It works in the whole of already-interpreted relationships. Thus, between the world and our understanding of it, there is a dialectical non-dualistic relationship.

Hence, coming this far in the present article, it seems that the lifeworld and pre-understanding are parts of the same whole. In ordinary cases, we take it for granted that unreflected experiences show the way when we try to understand and manage our existence. Husserl (1970) referred to this as the "natural attitude." According to Bengtsson (1993), Husserl described the natural attitude almost in the same way as the lifeworld—as the existence in which we live our lives and take many things for granted. "The lifeworld is thus not only pre-reflexive, but also pre-scientific; it precedes and is presupposed in both philosophy and science" (Bengtsson, 1993, p. 45). Merleau-Ponty (1962) developed the lifeworld theory a bit further by showing a circular relationship between world and subject as a fundamental characteristic of the lifeworld.

Reflections on pre-understanding are relevant in all empirical research, but it is rarely problematized in quantitative studies. When qualitative research methods were introduced, the lifeworld theory became increasingly important as epistemology. Dahlberg et al. (2008) referred to Husserl (1970) in suggesting that open and pliable lifeworld interviews provide access to individual perceptions of a research phenomenon. Large parts of the lifeworld are often tacit, and perceptions of meaning must be brought to the surface in order to become rich data in qualitative research.

To accomplish this the researcher needs to acquire an open attitude by controlling pre-understanding of the research phenomenon. This can perhaps be accomplished by putting forth questions such as the following:

- Does my interview technique contain many leading questions? Do I control the interviewee's answers in some other way?
- Have I asked follow-up questions that are not compliant with the research phenomenon because I misunderstood the informant's way of describing it?
- Have I added or subtracted something during the work of analysis? If so, in what way has my pre-understanding contributed to this?
- Is it difficult for me to develop my research further because I prefer a certain way of understanding meanings?
- Have I used similar analytical approaches so many times before that I have a hard time changing my way of thinking?

A quite well-known warning sign that a researcher's own lifeworld, in the shape of pre-understanding, has important impact on the findings is a lack of surprise (cf. Eriksson et al., 2020). If theoretical support has been used as an analytical tool, it is also important to critically re-examine findings that agree too well with the theory. The same can be true if cultural values in the researcher's own tradition shine through the findings, or when findings seem in some other way to be controlled by subjective values. To some extent consistent with this, a presentation of a researcher's professional background does not provide for complete information about a researcher's pre-understanding concerning research phenomena. And the piquant may occur that the less conscious the pre-understanding is, the easier it may be for a reader to reveal prejudices that the researcher is unaware of.

The qualitative research paradigm within caring science covers a continuum where a descriptive stance moves to varying degrees toward clarification, explanation, and interpretation. In descriptive phenomenological research, where the researcher's understanding is bridled (Dahlberg, 2006), in order to let the essential meaning of phenomena become visible, the researcher is careful not to add anything that is not obvious in the data (Björk-Brämberg, 2008; Wiklund Gustin, 2018). The search for implied or hidden meanings in data is often attributed to hermeneutics or even more clearly in the "hermeneutics of suspicion" (Kristersson-Uggla, 1994). The direction of suspicion is two-way. By puzzling over statements, meanings that are not obviously anchored in data can be clarified or explained and finally interpreted as suggestions of a meaning. Sometimes, a theory

can shed additional light on emerging meanings that were not initially obvious in data. Here, it is particularly important to be aware that the more an interpretation is pushed beyond data's obvious content, the more important it is for the researcher to reflect about why a preliminary interpretation is perceived as more meaningful than any other possible interpretation.

Conclusion

If a study aims to describe a phenomenon, within a caring science context, as being as purely from pre-understanding as possible, it is important to try to apply an open approach by not understanding too quickly, carelessly, or slovenly (Dahlberg, 2006). Such an approach became obvious in the second and third examples (Ekebergh, 2009; Lindberg, 2013). Yet, during data collection, it can be necessary to switch between listening, ingenuity, and creativity in trying to meet another person's lifeworld, as in the first example (Karlsson et al., 2016).

If an analysis aims to explain more than what is obvious in the data, as in the fourth example (Palmér, 2014), an interpretative method can fit well. The findings are preferably presented as suggestions of how to understand an issue, without direct claims to have reached and verified some kind of truth. Such an approach may involve unreflected parts of pre-understanding becoming conscious during the course of the analysis. This became clear when the validity of interpretations were tested against data in the last example (Nyström, 2003).

Hence, our discussion about how to treat pre-understanding in caring science research begins and ends openly. We suggest that the procedure depends on the purpose of the study and the method chosen. Therefore, until further notice, it seems reasonable to propose that the degree of interpretation in qualitative caring science research determines to what extent researchers need to dive deeper into their own history of effect (Gadamer, 1997) and reflect on how and why some ideas influence the perception of meaning in a research phenomenon, while other ideas are excluded. Such questions never end; all answers are always preliminary.

Nevertheless, the various parts of this article have contributed to a discussion that makes some conclusions possible:

- Pre-understanding is part of the lifeworld, and it often shapes our natural attitudes. It

exists in several levels of consciousness and is not always available for reflection.

- Trying to control one's own pre-understanding of a research phenomenon is nonetheless about moving from a natural attitude to a reflective stance by problematizing how a research phenomenon manifests itself in one's own lifeworld.
- A descriptive analysis has a direct relationship to data. The researcher needs a reflected, distanced, and disciplined approach to be able to present valid and stringent findings.
- An interpretive analysis, especially those with focus on hidden meanings in data, has a more indirect relationship to data. This makes it necessary to clarify how data has been interpreted, including arguments for why this particular interpretation is more meaningful than other possible interpretations.

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