COM 803 – Hermeneutics and Communication

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Professor

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**Assignment #3 – Essay on Hermeneutics**

1. Write a 5-page paper about the need for hermeneutics, or how to intelligently read the scholarly subject literature and published social research about the topic of your research interest. Explain why learning how to read scholarly literature is needed to learn how to do scholarly writing about your research interest. Cite sources from the seminal course resources and find at least two articles about a topic of your interest.

The student should direct developmental readings from Assignment #2 on the issue of hermeneutics and a subject of their research interest for this assignment.

**2. Paper Outline**

* 1. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.
  2. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.
  3. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.
  4. Use a minimum of **ten** scholarly research sources (NOTE: Use at least five books provided in course resources and the remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

Scholar-practitioners often find themselves attempting to solve everyday problems through research and scholarly publications. Often the goal of social research aims at solving problems that are identified through lived experiences. However, there is a fundamental element that every practitioner should be concerned with as a researcher. This is the concept of understanding and interpreting meaning throughout the world, with the hope of identifying abstract concepts such as social behavior. This concept is called *hermeneutics* (Zimmermann, 2015).

Understanding hermeneutics is important to ensure that scholars have gained complete insight to research publications for the purpose of both acquiring factual knowledge and articulating learned knowledge to others. Thus, a brief overview of what hermeneutics is and why it is important to study will be provided in this paper. In addition, the importance of reading scholarly research and interpreting research findings is essential to address social problems. Further, an overview on how peer-reviewed publications is organized and understanding this conventionalization can lead toward a better understanding of social researcher and literature frameworks. Lastly, an importance of how integrating reading and writing scholarly publications will be discussed.

**Understanding Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics is the art and study of interpretation (Zimmermann, 2015). While this term is primarily found in biblical and theological studies, the origin of interpretation involves more than textual interpretation of words and the meaning of words. Hermeneutics involves the human experiences that support the interpretation of all elements of life (Zimmermann, 2015). In a philosophical perspective, hermeneutics can be connected with *epistemology*, which is the branch of thought that helps to explain reality and other concepts and acquisition of knowledge (Varlik, 2024).

Using educational and psychology constructivist theory, knowledge is gained by preceding prior knowledge and the ability of one’s skills and abilities to gain said knowledge (Wibowo et al, 2025). However, knowledge is just the biproduct of interpretation, and knowledge cannot be done without first an interpretation or understanding of theoretical frameworks or conceptual interpretation of the world. The process by which text is analyze and evaluated is both a skill and art (Paul & Elder, 2008). In the same way that humans are able to subconsciously interpret what a red light is at an intersection, and respond according to that interpretation is an unconscious application of hermeneutics. Thus, the importance of discussing the role of interpreting scholarly literature in research is important to discuss future application in resolving problems based on theoretical interpretations and findings.

**The Role of Scholarly Literature in Research**

One of the primary goals of scholarly research is to interpret and understand the past research that has occurred to help develop current day research findings as it relates to relevant theory and literary practices (Shehadeh, 2020). Building upon a foundation of existing knowledge is essential to interpreting, understanding, and generating future research (Aprilianti, 2024). Research often begins by interpreting of a current topic founded by a common knowledge about a particular topic (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015).

Another benefit researchers learn from scholarly research is the interpretation on how to function and write as a scholar. As with any learned behavior, the more one practices reading scholarly publications, the more one before competent in interpreting and producing future research (Kameli et al., 2020). In addition, as one continues to review scholarly literature, especially within a specific social science domain (i.e., psychology, sociology, etc.) the more that scholar will begin to interpret domain-specific jargon, and theoretical frameworks and theories that help explain the worldview about those academic domines (Gillo, 2021).

**Understanding Methodologies and Approaches to Research Publications**

Research publications are typically organized in a systematic and meaningful way. Depending upon the research intent, scholarly peer-reviewed publications generally align in in the following order: (1) Problem statement(s) or research question(s) are proposed; (2) Literature review is presented; (3) Scholarly methodology is discussed; (4) Research findings or results are presented; (5) Lastly, a dissimilation of the findings with an interpretation of those findings in a debrief or closing statements section form the authors (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). While there may be subtle differences in the organizational of peer-reviewed publications, the framework generally is aligned in this order.

This organizational structure to research publications allows for easier interpretation in reading scholarly texts. Readers can easily identify elements that are essential for their research purpose and finds relatively easy because elements are organized in meaningful ways. For example, the literature review of a publication provides all the prior knowledge of the topic discussed. This prior knowledge is what becomes the foundation of identifying insights to how prior research has address gaps and insights to the most present date. Thus, focusing on a knowledge of where and how to interpret critical information supports Zimmermann’s (2015) viewpoint that the importance of hermeneutics is more critical to know because without the ability to interpret information, no research could be conducted.

**Integrating Reading and Writing in Scholarly Research**

It is important to understand that the interpretation of reading, and writing are two distinct skills. Reading an author’s literature requires the foundational concept that the author is articulating their shared experiences to the reader (Paul & Elder, 2008). In this same manner, when researchers begin to publish their research findings, they are sharing with future readers their shared experiences of their study and interpretation from their shared experiences.

As such, both reading and writing scholarly publications (including biblical scared texts) often result in an interpretive journey to uncover the meaning behind the shared experiences (Duvall & Hays, 2012). In addition, whenever hermeneutics are not properly conceptualized, it may result in inadequate linguistic understanding from the written text (Wang, 2024). For this reason, scholars should understand the connection between both reading and writing through the different lenses within human shared experiences.

One conceptualization scholar-practitioners should consider is the cultural and technical interpretations of subjects that could lead readers in misinterpreting scholarly research. Kameli and colleagues (2020) share that certain subjects may lead for different viewpoints in interpretation. For example, certain subjects may have more definitive interpretations of context such as math or in other sciences, while discussion in social sciences, where human behavior has large variation of interpretation may require added levels of communication and translation to a common understanding. This concept is known as *operationalization* in research (Roos et al., 2023), which aims at defining terminology for readers to understand from the perspective of the author’s interpretation.

In addition, the connection between reading and write scholarly literature helps produce one’s ability to develop critical thinking skills and to generate one’s scholarly voice. As both literary discourse and interpretation help develop a keen sense of reality (McGuirk, 2021). Furthermore, as scholars begin to write and articulate their shared experiences, there is an approach to modeling similar scholarly tone that is supported by academic disciplines. For example, while it is possible for a scholar to write in first-person for psychological-based research publications, it is often shunned and founded upon in scholarly writing. However, there also is support for this tone of voice that is supported, especially if the researcher is discussing important elements related to action research and other internal discoveries (Ip, 2017).

**Conclusion**

The importance of hermeneutics is essential for not only interpreting scholarly literature, but to also help interpret the experiences and mysteries of the world. Without the ability to interpret what is read, the acquisition of knowledge cannot be gained. Thus, it is essential to understand that all knowledge is gained based upon interpretation of that knowledge. However, what is most essential about hermeneutics is that the process by which one interprets text is only as good as the means by which that person interprets their experience. In essence, like the old adage states, *“Trash in, trash out,”* the same can be said about the quality of one’s hermeneutics.

If the interpretation was incorrect then the potential knowledge gain will also be incorrect. This is very important in today’s light, as concerns about false media news and rhetoric can sway the thought of public opinion. As such, this all stems from the concept of hermeneutics and if a wrongful interpretation of the truth can lead people astray from the essence of the truth. As the writer for the Book of Hebrews states, “Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings…” (NASB). It is therefore the responsibility of each scholar to ensure that the interpretation of any research read is keenly interpreted with accuracy.

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