PHENOMENOLOGY – QUALITATIVE APPROACH

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LET’S WATCH THESE..
DEFINITION AND BACKGROUND

The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence.

Human experience may be phenomena such as insomnia, being left out, anger, grief, or undergoing coronary artery bypass surgery (Moustakas, 1994).

The inquirer collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon, and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals. This description consists of “what” they experienced and “how” they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenological Study

Meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon.
POPULAR IN SOCIAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Psychology
(Giorgi, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1989)

Nursing and the health science
(Nieswiadomy, 1993; Oiler, 1986)

Sociology
(Borgatta & Borgatta, 1992; Swingewood, 1991)

Education
(Tesch, 1988; van Manen, 1990)

PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY
DEFINITION AND BACKGROUND

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)
- German mathematician
- Ideas are abstract
- Was known to call any project currently under way “phenomenology” (Natanson, 1973)

Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty (Spiegelberg, 1982)
- Expand Husserl’s view
- Merleau-Ponty (1962) – still raised the question, “What is phenomenology?”

Moutakas (1994), Stewart and Mickunas (1990) and van Manen (1990)
- Seem to point to different philosophical arguments for the use of phenomenology today.

Philosophical assumptions rest on some common grounds
- The study of the lived experiences of persons
- The view that these experiences are conscious ones (van Manen, 1990)
- The development of descriptions of the essences of these experiences, not explanations or analysis (Moustakas, 1994).
A return to the traditional tasks of philosophy

- By the end of the 19th century, philosophy had become limited to exploring a world by empirical means, which was called “scientism”. The return to the traditional tasks of philosophy that existed before philosophy became enamoured with empirical science is a return to the Greek conception of philosophy as a search for wisdom.

A philosophy without presuppositions

- Phenomenology’s approach is to suspend all judgements about what is real – the “natural attitude” – until they are founded on a more certain basis. This suspension is called “epoche” by Husserl.

The intentionality of consciousness

- The idea is that consciousness is always directed toward an object. Reality of an object, then, is inextricably related to one’s consciousness of it. Thus, reality, according to Husserl, is not divided into subjects and objects, but into the dual Cartesian nature of both subjects and objects as they appear in consciousness.

The refusal of the subject-object dichotomy

- The theme flows naturally from the intentionality of consciousness. The reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual.
DEFINITION AND BACKGROUND

An individual writing a phenomenology would be remiss to not include some discussion about the philosophical presuppositions of phenomenology along with the methods in this form of inquiry.

Moustakas (1994) devotes over one hundred pages to the philosophical assumptions before he turns to the methods.
# ASPECTS OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Four aspects of lived experience of interest to phenomenologist are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lived space or spatiality</th>
<th>Lived body or corporeality</th>
<th>Lived time or temporality</th>
<th>Lived human relation or relationality</th>
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## PHENOMENOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AS A SCIENCE</th>
<th>AS A METHOD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to ground an infallible knowledge? (Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Neurosciences)</td>
<td>How do we convey the sense of what we know? (Giorgi: descriptive psychological method)</td>
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TYPES OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Hermeneutic Phenomenology (van Manen, 1990)

Empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994)
# TYPES OF PHENOMENOLOGY

## Hermeneutic Phenomenology (van Manen, 1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Widely cited in the health literature (Morse &amp; Field, 1995)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An educator. Wrote an instructive book on HP that describes research as oriented toward lived experience (phenomenology) and interpreting the “texts” of life (hermeneutics).</td>
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<td>No set of methods but suggests as a dynamic interplay among six research activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Researchers first turn to a phenomenon, an “abiding concern” (p13), which seriously interest them (e.g., reading, running, driving, mothering). In the process, they reflect on essential themes, what constitutes the nature of this lived experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They write a description of the phenomenon, maintaining a strong relation to the topic of inquiry and balancing the parts of the writing to the whole.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phenomenology is not only a description, but it is also seen as an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation (i.e., the research “mediates” between different meanings (p20) of the meaning of the lived experiences.</td>
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</table>
Types of Phenomenology

Empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994)

- Focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants.
- Focuses on one of Husserl’s concepts, epoche (or bracketing), in which investigators set aside their experiences to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination.
- “Transcendental” means “in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time (p34). This state is seldom perfectly achieved.
- Cresswell (2007, p60) – researchers use when they begin a project by describing their own experiences with the phenomenon and bracketing out their views before proceeding with the experiences of others.
## TYPES OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994)

| Besides bracketing, **transcendental phenomenology** draws on the Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology (e.g. Giorgi, 1985) and the data analysis procedures of Van Kaam (1966) and Colaizzi (1978) | Moustakas (1994) - procedures consist of identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one’s experiences, and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon. | Researcher analyzes the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combines the statements into themes. | The he/she develops a **textual description** of the experiences of the persons (what participants experienced), a **structural description** of their experiences (how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context), and a combination of the textual and structural descriptions to convey an overall **essence** of the experience. |
PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Researcher determines if the research problem is best examined using a phenomenological approach. It is important to understand several individuals’ common or shared experiences of a phenomenon. To develop practices or policies, or to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon.

A phenomenon of interest to study eg anger, professionalism, what it means to be underweight, or what it means to be a wrestler, is identified. Moustakas (1994) provides numerous examples of phenomena that have been studied.

The researcher recognizes and specifies the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology. One can could write about the combination of objective reality and individual experiences. These lived fully describe how participants view the phenomenon, researchers must bracket out, as much as possible, their own experiences.
Data are collected from the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Often data consists in-depth interviews and multiple interviews with participants. Polkinghorne (1989) recommends that researchers interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon.

Other forms of data may also be collected eg observations, journals, art, poetry, music, and other forms of art. Van Manen (1990) mentions taped conversations, formally written responses, accounts of vicarious experiences of drama, films, poetry, and novels.

The participants are asked two broad, general questions (Moustakas, 1994): What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?

Other open-ended question may also be asked, but these two, especially, focus attention on gathering data that will lead to a textual description and a structural description of the experiences, and ultimately provide an understanding of the common experiences of the participants.
Phenomenological data analysis steps are generally similar for all psychological phenomenologists who discuss the methods (Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). Building on the data from the first and second research questions, data analysts go through the data (e.g., interview transcriptions) and highlight “significant statements”, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon.

Moustakas (1994) calls this step horizontalization. Next, the researcher develops clusters of meaning from these significant statements into themes.

These significant statements and themes are then used to write a description of what the participants experienced (textual description). They are also used to write a description of the context or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon, called imaginative variation or structural description.

Moustakas (1994) adds a further step: Researchers also write about their own experiences and the context and situations that have influenced their experiences. These personal statements can be included at the beginning of the phenomenology (Creswell, 2007, p62) or in a methods discussion of the role of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).
From the structural and textural descriptions, the researcher then writes a composite description that presents the “essence” of the phenomenon, called the essential, invariant structure (or essence).

Primarily this passage focuses on the common experiences of the participants. All experiences have an underlying structure (grief is the same whether the loved one is a puppy, a parakeet, or a child).

It is a descriptive passage, a long paragraph or two, and the reader should come away from the phenomenology with the feeling. “I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that“ (Polkinghorne, 1989, p46).
### CHALLENGES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deep understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by several individuals.</th>
<th>• Knowing some common experiences can be valuable for groups such as therapists, teachers, health personnel, and policymakers.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can involve a streamlined form of data collection by including only single or multiple interviews with participants.</td>
<td>• Moustakas (1994) approach for analyzing the data helps provide a structured approach for novice researchers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires at least some understanding of the broader philosophical assumption, and these should be identified by the researcher.</td>
<td>• The participants in the study need to be carefully chosen to be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon in question so researcher can forge a common understanding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bracketing personal experiences may be difficult for the researcher to implement.</td>
<td>• An interpretive approach to phenomenology would signal this as impossibility (van Manen, 1990) – for the researcher to become separated from the text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Perhaps we need a new definition of epoche or bracketing. | • Such as suspending our understanding in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity (Le Vasseur, 2003).  
• The researcher needs to decide how and in what way his personal understandings will be introduced into the study. |
DESCARTES AND HUME

Cogito ergo sum (I think therefore I am)

Perception is the beginning of our knowledge
THE RADICAL DOUBT OR THE CHANGE OF ATTITUDE

- Epoche (withholding, suspension, parenthesize)
- Reduction (emphasizing the intuition, going back to the primordial lived-experience)
- Imaginative variation
WHAT WAS YOUR MENTAL ATTITUDE BEFORE AND AFTER THE ANALYSIS

Intentionality

Tendere in = aiming at

Intention of Meaning

Instinctive or Blind Intentionality (Yamaguchi, Hart)

Intentionality as an Instinctual presence of the other (Lipps)

Intentionality without object (Bernet)

Horizontal Intentionality (Dan Zahavi)

Narrative way of givenness (Ricoeur)

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HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE LIVED-EXPERIENCE OF THE PARTICIPANT BEFORE AND AFTER THE DATA ANALYSIS?

Phenomenon  Percept  Essence

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WHAT WERE THE TOOLS OF YOUR RESEARCH? (A SYNTHESIS)

- Description or interpretation
- Epoche and Reduction
- Imaginative Variation
- Seeing Essence
WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MEANING, THE SENSE AND THE VALUE OF YOUR RESEARCH?

- Meaning
  - Sense
  - Essence
  - Truth
  - Eidos
  - Validity

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ANALYSIS

• Search for patterns in statements across cases that lead to characteristics that are not part of the phenomenon and those that are, distinctions with other related terms.

• Recursive coding until essence is captured across cases.

• Specialized text analysis software: Nvivo or others
ACCORDING TO CRESWELL
DEFINITION AND BACKGROUND

describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon.

purpose is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence.

qualitative researchers identify a phenomenon of human experience eg: grief, insomnia.

inquirer then collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon.

develops a composite description of the essence of the experience.

description consists of "what" they experienced and "how".
PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

a philosophy without presuppositions (suspend all judgments about what is real until they are founded on a more certain basis)

the intentionality of consciousness (reality of an object is related to one's consciousness of it)

the refusal of the subject-object dichotomy (reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual)
TYPES OF PHENOMENOLOGY

- Hermeneutic - research as oriented toward lived experience and interpreting the texts of life.

- Researchers first turn to a phenomenon which interests them, reflect on essential themes, then write a description of the phenomenon maintaining a strong relation to the topic of inquiry and balancing the parts of writing to the whole.

- It is an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences.

- Psychological, transcendental or empirical phenomenology is focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on the description of the experiences of the participants.

- Investigators set aside their experiences as much as possible to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination.

- Researchers identify a phenomenon, bracketing out one's experiences, collecting data, from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon, analyzes the data by reducing information to quotes and combines them to themes.

- The researcher then develops a textual description (what) and a structural description (how in terms of conditions and situations) and combines them to convey an overall experience.
PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH

- the researcher determines if the research problem is best examined using the phenomenological approach
- a phenomenon of interest is identified
- researchers recognizes and specifies the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology
- data is collected
- two broad questions are asked: What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? and What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon? (other open ended questions may be asked but these two are the focus)
- phenomenological data analysis- highlight significant statements, sentences and quotes and develop clusters of meaning from themes
- statements and themes are then used to write a textual and structural description
- the researcher then writes composite description that presents the essence of the phenomenon
CHALLENGES

requires the researcher to understand the broader philosophical assumptions

the researcher needs to decide how and in what way his or her personal understandings will be introduced into the study

participants need to be carefully choose the participants who have experienced the phenomenon
ACCORDING TO MAX VAN MANEN
PHENOMENOLOGY IS NOT A SET OF FIXED PROCEDURES, HOWEVER HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH IS AN COMBINATION OF SIX ACTIVITIES:

(1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;

(2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;

(3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;

(4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;

(5) manipulating a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;

(6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.

(pp. 30-31)
TO PRODUCE LIVED-EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTIONS

(1) You need to describe the experience as you live(d) through it avoiding as much as possible causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations.

(2) Describe the experience from the inside as it were; almost like a state of mind: the feelings, the mood, the emotions, etc.

(3) Focus on a particular example or incident of the object of the experience: describe specific events, an adventure, a happening, a particular experience.

(4) Try to focus on an example of the experience which stands out for its vividness, or as it was the first time.

(5) Attend to how the body feels, how things smell(ed), how they sound(ed), etc.

(6) Avoid trying to beautify your account with fancy phrases or flowery terminology. (1990, pp. 66-67)
TO DEVELOP THEMATIC STATEMENTS

"the wholistic or sententious approach; the selective or highlighting approach; and the detailed or line-by-line approach" (1990, p. 93). Each approach guides a different view of the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The first approach</th>
<th>The second approach</th>
<th>The third approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>more global, seeking overall meaning of the text.</td>
<td>focuses on phrases or sentences that stand out in the text.</td>
<td>is a close examination of the text sentence by sentence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE FOLLOWING ISSUES NEED TO BE ADDRESSED FROM AN ETHICAL POINT OF VIEW

(1) The research may have certain effects on the people with whom the research is concerned and who will be interested in the phenomenological work.

(2) There are possible effects of the research methods on the institutions in which the research is conducted.

(3) The research methods used may have lingering effects on the actual "subjects" involved in the study.

(4) Phenomenological projects and their methods often have a transformative effect on the researcher. (pp. 162-153)


![Flowchart with categories: Thematically, Exemplificatively, Exergetically, Existentiatory, Analytically, Inventing an Approach]
ACCORDING TO CLARK MOUSTAKAS

When a person acts without knowledge of what he thinks, feels, needs or wants, he does not yet have the option of choosing to act differently.

Clark Moustakas
EMPIRICAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH

- utilizes an individual's experience in order to obtain rich descriptions of a reaction to an event or, phenomenon.
- These descriptions are the basis for a reflective analysis that will help to understand the essence of the experience.

- The original data is comprised of 'naïve' descriptions obtained through open-ended questions and dialogue.
- The researcher describes the nature of the experience through the reflection and interpretation of the participant's story.
- From there, general meanings are derived.
Phenomenology attempts to eliminate everything that represents a *pre-judgement* or *pre-supposition*. The researcher must keep an open mind and describe things as they are, not as he or she feels they are. The first person reports of life experiences are what characterizes phenomenological research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Epoche</strong></th>
<th><strong>Phenomenological Reduction</strong></th>
<th><strong>Horizontalization</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>things can not be felt to be known in advance or felt to be known without internal reflection and meaning. Only your own perception can point to truth.</td>
<td>describing just what you see, external and internal, the relationship between phenomenon and self.</td>
<td>the never ending process of transcending information and knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final step in the phenomenological research is the **synthesis of meanings and essences**. From here the researcher comes to a final enlightenment or truth.
The researcher must organize, present and analyze the data. The data is then summarized.

He or she distinguishes the findings from prior research, and like other research methods, suggests further investigation.

Finally he or she will discuss the outcomes in terms of social meanings and personal and professional values.
### PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Horizontalization:</th>
<th>• Every statement has equal value.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delimited Horizons or Meanings</td>
<td>• Horizons that stand out as invariant qualities of the experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invariant Qualities and Themes</td>
<td>• non-repetitive, non-overlapping constituents clustered into themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Textural Descriptions</td>
<td>• An integration, descriptively, of the invariant textural constituents and themes of each research participant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite Textural Description</td>
<td>• an integration of all of the individual textural descriptions into a group or universal textural description.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IMAGINATIVE VARIATION
VARY POSSIBLE MEANINGS

**Vary Perspectives of the Phenomenon**
- From different vantage points, such as opposite meanings and various roles.

**Free Fantasy Variations**
- Consider freely the possible structural qualities or dynamics that evoke the textural qualities. Construct a list of structural qualities of the experience.

**Develop Structural Themes**
- Cluster the structural qualities into themes.

**Employ Universal Structures as Themes**
- Time, space, relationship to self, to others; bodily concerns, causal or intentional structures.

**Individual Structural Descriptions**
- For each co-researcher, integrate the structural qualities and themes into an individual structural description of the experience.
SYNTHESIS OF COMPOSITE TEXTURAL AND COMPOSITE STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTIONS

- Intuitively-reflectively integrate the composite textural and composite structural descriptions to develop a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon or experience.
METHODOLOGY

PREPARING TO COLLECT DATA

Formulate the question: Define terms of question

Conduct literature review and determine original nature of study

Develop criteria for selecting participants: Establish contract, obtain informed consent, insure confidentiality, agree to place and time commitments, and obtain permission to record and publish

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We can help a person to be himself by our own willingness to steep ourselves temporarily in his world, in his private feelings and experiences. By our affirmation of the person as he is, we give him support and strength to take the next step in his own growth.

— Clark Moustakas —
Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)

- The founder of Phenomenology.
- The Philosopher of Transcendental Phenomenology.
- Applies "phenomenological reduction" into "naturalistic standpoint" (Sawicki n.d, para. 3).
- No theoretical presuppositions. (Sawicki n.d, para. 7).
- Uses the act of continuous perception and pure imagination (Beyer 2003, para. 56).
Through phenomenological reflection, we come to see that consciousness is intentional, that is, directed towards an object. Consciousness is consciousness of something.

Through epoche all objects become reduced to their experienceable properties.

Through epoche, Husserl ultimately tries to ground a foundationalist epistemology and an idealist metaphysics. It is exclusively consciousness (conscious subjectivity or “pure ego”) that has absolute being, and all other beings are dependent on consciousness of their existence. This leads to the dissolution of the world into the realm of consciousness. Here we see an idealist turn in Husserl.

Husserl is more radical there is no thing-in-itself beyond the reach of possible experience. Note however that nothing has changes with epoche, only our attitude toward the world.
A script for writing a qualitative purpose statement

The purpose of this ______ (strategy of inquiry, such as ethnography, case study, or other type) study is (was? will be?) to ______ (understand? describe? develop? discover?) the _______ (central phenomenon being studied) for ______ (the participants, such as the individual, groups, organization) at _____ (research site). At this stage in the research, the _____ (central phenomenon being studied) will be generally defined as _____ (provide a general definition).
THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION