

Introduction

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What a valuable gift phenomenology is for qualitative researchers. No matter what experience a researcher is investigating, phenomenology allows a privileged view of the meaning of that experience from the perspective of the participants. The readers of your study will be able to walk a mile in the shoes of the participants to learn firsthand what that experience is like. For example, what is it like for a pregnant to be repeatedly battered by her partner? What is it like for a person to have to sell the family business? What is it like for a man to be diagnosed with prostate cancer? What are the experiences of women executives after returning to work from childbirth in a technology-sector setting? Such valuable insights into these and so many other experiences can be gained through phenomenology. Use of phenomenology is not discipline limited. Any discipline, be it in the Health Sciences, Business, Education, Anthropology, etc., will benefit from this type of qualitative research.

You may ask, “Why use phenomenology as a research approach?” It is a source for questioning the meaning of life and how persons live it. This qualitative approach extends scientific knowledge by prying open what researchers would ordinarily not question. In phenomenology, researchers attempt to put aside their past experiences, biases, everyday understanding, and presuppositions about what they are studying in order to learn to see the phenomenon with fresh eyes without those blinders on. Phenomenological researchers try to eliminate their biases so that they won’t taint their study outcomes. Objectivity is critical in phenomenological studies. In objectivity, researchers try to remain faithful and oriented to the phenomenon being studied while avoiding their unreflective presuppositions. The lived experience is sought, which is the experience a person lives through before we take on a reflective view of it (van Manen, 2014). Getting at essences and away from researchers’ biases is key in this qualitative approach.

Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the meaning of experiences in everyday life. Phenomenology uses particular experiences to

inductively describe the general or universal essence, namely the heart and soul of the phenomenon. In phenomenological analysis, these individual experiences of participants are stripped away of the particulars to describe the essence of the experience, that is, what makes an experience what it is, and without it, it is not that experience. Based on the findings of phenomenological studies, effective interventions can be designed to yield the greatest impact. To be able to achieve these lofty goals of phenomenology, there is one caveat: Qualitative researchers must pay meticulous attention to its methodology.

This book has been a desire of mine for more than 20 years since I started teaching PhD students qualitative research methodology courses at the University of Connecticut. What I wished for each semester as I was filling out my required textbook order form for my courses was a textbook that concentrated on the different methodologies of descriptive and interpretive phenomenology. As a result, I needed to piece together multiple readings for my students on different phenomenological methodologies. I hope with the publishing of my textbook, other faculty and students will reap its benefits.

Many books have been published on the philosophy of phenomenology but not on its methodology. Yes, the philosophy of phenomenology that underpins research is critical, but attention must also be paid to methodology. There are two types of phenomenology: descriptive and interpretive phenomenology. In descriptive phenomenology, the essence of an experience is described. Interpretive phenomenology is also called hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. Interpretation is viewed as critical to understanding. In hermeneutic phenomenology, understanding is achieved through co-constructing the data with the research participants as understanding is achieved through a continual movement between the parts and the whole of the text of the participants' descriptions.

Method slurring is a pervasive problem in qualitative research. Phenomenology is not exempt from this problematic issue. Often I have read phenomenological studies, for instance, where the researcher has combined aspects of more than one methodology together. Picking and choosing parts of different phenomenological methodologies and combining them in one study definitely lessens its methodological rigor. One reason for reviewers' rejecting a manuscript for publication in a journal is method slurring. Also, grant reviewers with expertise in qualitative research may assign a grant poor scores because of method slurring.

In a cross-disciplinary review of phenomenological studies to prepare for writing this book, it became apparent that often the studies lacked methodological rigor. For instance, though the study was labeled by its author as being a phenomenological study, there was no specific methodology identified. Was

it a descriptive phenomenological study or interpretive? Depending on which type, whose approach was used? Giorgi? van Manen? Colaizzi? These studies appeared to be more like generic qualitative research that does not follow a specific qualitative design. In other studies, even though researchers did identify which phenomenological approach they used, they did not stay true to that methodology. For instance, in Giorgi's approach, the researcher should not go back to the participants to validate the findings. However, some researchers did report they returned to the participants for member checking even though they stated they were using Giorgi's methodology. With this book, it is my hope that method slurring in phenomenological research will be decreased. Primary sources for each methodology are included in this book that should be used to guide researchers. So this is some of my rationale for designing this book to concentrate on methodology.

The audience for whom this book was written spans both faculty and graduate students. Professors who teach qualitative methodology courses, graduate students, junior faculty who are conducting a phenomenological study for the first time, and also senior faculty who haven't taken any qualitative methods courses are all appropriate audiences for this book. This book is also cross-disciplinary. It is written for faculty and students from all disciplines where qualitative research is conducted. Examples of these disciplines include Nursing, Business, Sociology, Social Work, Psychology, Nutritional Sciences, Sports Management, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Medicine, and Education. Faculty, students, and qualitative researchers from across the globe will benefit from this book, which has an international perspective. For each different descriptive and interpretive phenomenological methodology described in this book, there are international examples of research that used that specific approach.

This book is divided into four parts. Part I briefly provides a beginning understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of the methodologies of descriptive and interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology. Part II focuses on descriptive phenomenology. It consists of four chapters describing Colaizzi, Giorgi, van Kaam, Moustakas's modification, and Dahlberg, Dahlberg, and Nyström's approaches. Part III concentrates on interpretive phenomenology. This section comprises four chapters: one each for van Manen, Benner, Dahlberg et al., and Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's methodologies. Part IV addresses evaluating, writing, and teaching phenomenology. The final chapter provides an example of using phenomenology to develop a research program. The Glossary follows the last chapter and gives definitions of the key terms found in this book. In the appendices can be found two study activities for students, plus both a descriptive and an interpretive phenomenological proposal.

Chapter 2

To provide a little more in-depth description of what each chapter covers, we will start with Chapter 2. In order to provide a foundation for both descriptive and interpretive phenomenology, Chapter 2 briefly focuses on philosophy. As stated earlier, there are many books published on phenomenological philosophy for readers to consult, so here only a cursory discussion is provided. In Chapter 2, four philosophers are presented: Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Their philosophies provide the underpinnings for the different methodologies that follow in this book.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, the spotlight shines on Paul Colaizzi's methodology of descriptive phenomenology. Each step involved in conducting a study using his approach is described. An example of a study based on Colaizzi's methodology from my research program on postpartum depression is detailed as an illustration. The chapter ends with examples of studies from a variety of disciplines across the globe whose researchers employed Colaizzi's approach. The purpose of these published studies and those included in the other chapters of this book is to illustrate details of how in reality studies are carried out using the focused methodology of each chapter.

Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, Amedeo Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological methodology is explained. The steps making up his approach are each described, and his study on jealousy is used to concretely illustrate his steps. Swedish researchers' study on the experience of being an autonomous individual while dependent on advanced medical technology is recounted to provide an example of Giorgi's methodology. Other international examples of published studies employing his approach are included in the chapter.

Chapter 5

Adrian van Kaam's descriptive phenomenological methodology is the focus in Chapter 5. His 12-step approach is addressed and is supplemented by interdisciplinary examples of published studies to illustrate his methodology. Moustakas's modification of van Kaam's approach is frequently used by qualitative researchers, and so his modification is also included in this chapter.

Chapter 6

In Chapter 6 can be found Karin Dahlberg, Helena Dahlberg, and Maria Nyström's reflective lifeworld research methodology. Their approach begins

with the art of “bridling”, where researchers reflect on their experiences so they do not go unnoticed in the research process. Dahlberg and colleagues prefer the term “bridling” over “bracketing.” Their methodology provides two types of analysis: one for a descriptive phenomenological study and one for an interpretive study. The focus of this chapter is on descriptive phenomenology using their reflective lifeworld approach. The chapter ends with a comparison of the five descriptive phenomenological methodologies of Colaizzi, Giorgi, van Kaam, Moustakas, and Dahlberg et al.

Chapter 7

Part III starts with Chapter 7, which centers on Max van Manen’s interpretive phenomenological methodology. Addressed here are the six phases of his approach. In order to provide concrete examples of the application of his methodology, some international published studies from various disciplines are described.

Chapter 8

In Chapter 8, Patricia Benner’s interpretive phenomenology is the focal point. Her methodology consists of multiple interrelated strategies, including thematic analysis, searching for paradigm cases, and analysis of exemplars. International examples of published studies from Iran and Switzerland that incorporated Benner’s approach are included in this chapter to help illustrate her methodology.

Chapter 9

Jonathan Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin’s interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is concentrated on in Chapter 9. Their method comprises six steps, which are explained. Illustrating their approach are studies from the United States (U.S.), United Kingdom (UK), Canada, Israel, and Ireland.

Chapter 10

The focal point in Chapter 10 is the second of Dahlberg et al.’s reflective lifeworld research, this time explaining their hermeneutic approach. A study conducted by Dahlberg and colleagues on inadequate care in emergency units is described to illustrate this approach. Additional examples of studies conducted by researchers in Sweden are included. This chapter concludes with a comparison of the four interpretive phenomenological methodologies addressed in Part III.

Chapter 11

Part IV begins with Chapter 11 where the target is evaluating the rigor of qualitative research. The debate over the terminology of trustworthiness versus reliability and validity is explored. Strategies for enhancing the quality of qualitative inquiry according to different phases of a research study are outlined. Criteria from two guides that specifically evaluate a phenomenological study are presented.

Chapter 12

Once a phenomenological study is complete, researchers' attention turns to the challenging task of writing. This is the focus of Chapter 12. There is an artistic craft involved in writing up phenomenological research in order to bring the riches of the findings to life. Creative strategies for presenting qualitative results are provided in this chapter along with specific examples of diagrams, figures, and tables I have used in publishing my own phenomenological studies.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 addresses developing a program of research using phenomenology. The previous chapters in this book have focused on conducting a single phenomenological study. In this chapter, I wanted to provide an example of how researchers can develop a research program using a series of phenomenological studies they have systematically conducted. One option for using these studies is to develop a middle-range theory.

Chapter 14

As faculty, we have a responsibility to prepare the next generation of phenomenological scholars. Here faculty teaching strategies come into play. Chapter 14 is devoted to teaching phenomenology. Teaching approaches that have been published are described. Next I share examples of my own teaching assignments in my qualitative methodology courses that I use with my PhD students at the University of Connecticut.

GLOSSARY

Key terms used in phenomenological research are defined here for quick reference.

APPENDICES

In the appendices are two study activities for students. The first activity (Appendix A) directs students to choose one of the phenomenological methodologies described in this textbook and conduct an interdisciplinary search using various databases for phenomenological studies that used this approach. Students are then asked to select one study that is of interest to them and critique its methodology. Students can share their studies with the rest of the class. The second student activity (Appendix B) focuses on each student's discipline. Using the primary database for their discipline, such as ERIC for education, students report on the number of published phenomenological studies in their discipline. Which specific phenomenological approaches are used most often by qualitative researchers in their discipline? In appendices C and D can be found one example of a descriptive phenomenological proposal and one for an interpretive phenomenology proposal that can be used as examples for students.

REFERENCES

van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.