under study in situations or contexts that are familiar to interviewees and where there is a basis for mutual understanding in the researcher–participant relationship. When ways of experiencing are separated from the individuals through the categories of description, the variation described may be compared with findings from other contexts, for instance, across contexts of learning in formal education and work–life learning.

Phenomenographic research findings hold strong potential relevance for various professional practices. Knowledge about differences between various ways of experiencing particular phenomena and of the potential for change from less to more complex understandings are important in a number of fields such as teaching and learning, as well as for developing services and tools within different institutional practices.

Louise B. Limberg

See also Comparative Analysis; Interviewing; Phenomenology; Researcher–Participant Relationships; Semi-Structured Interview

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Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the reflective study of prereflective or lived experience. To say it somewhat differently, a main characteristic of the phenomenological tradition is that it is the study of the lifeworld as we immediately experience it, prereflectively, rather than as we conceptualize, theorize, categorize, or reflect on it. Phenomenology is now commonly considered to be one of the alternative qualitative research methodologies to which researchers can turn. But phenomenology is also a term that can carry quite different meanings depending on theoretical and practical contexts.

Originally, phenomenology was the name for the major movement in philosophy and the humanities in continental Europe in the 20th century. More recently, the term has acquired a broader meaning as phenomenology has been developed as a human science that is employed in professional disciplines such as education, health science, clinical psychology, and law. Phenomenological research is the study of lived or experiential meaning and attempts to describe and interpret these meanings in the ways that they emerge and are shaped by consciousness, language, our cognitive and noncognitive sensibilities, and by our preunderstandings and presuppositions. Phenomenology may explore the unique meanings of any human experience or phenomenon. For example, it may study what it is like to have a conversation, how students experience difficulty in learning something, how pain is experienced in childbirth, what it is like to experience obsessive compulsions, how young people begin to experience secrecy and inwardness, and so forth.

This entry describes the emergence of traditions and contexts, some key concepts of phenomenology, and methods of phenomenology as a human science.

The Emergence of Traditions and Their Contexts

Within the large sweep of phenomenological philosophy, a variety of phenomenological schools and traditions may be distinguished, such as transcendental, existential, hermeneutic, linguistic, and ethical phenomenology. Often these traditions are strongly associated with renowned phenomenological scholars.

Transcendental phenomenology may be identified with the pathbreaking work of Edmund Husserl and his interpreters. Some basic terms of transcendental phenomenology are *intentionality*, *eidetic reduction*, and *constitution of meaning*. For Husserl, phenomenology is the rigorous, human science of all conceivable transcendental phenomena. It describes the way that knowledge comes into being in consciousness and clarifies the assumptions upon which all human understandings are grounded.

Existential phenomenology is often associated with Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir. Some basic terms of existential phenomenology are *modes of being*, *ontology*, and *lifeworld*. In his last work, *The Crisis of the European Sciences,* Husserl had already turned phenomenological analysis from the transcendental ego and consciousness to the prereflective lifeworld of everyday experience. Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty radicalized this turn toward the existential world as we live and experience it. With Heidegger, this turn became an ontological rather than an epistemological project. Instead of asking how the being of things are constituted as intentional objects in consciousness, Heidegger asked how the being of beings shows itself as a revealing of being itself.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is linked especially with Hans-Georg Gadamer and with Paul Ricoeur. Some basic terms of hermeneutic phenomenology are *interpretation, textual meaning, dialogue, preunderstanding,* and *tradition.* Phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when its method is taken to be interpretive (rather than purely descriptive as in transcendental phenomenology). But the contrast between descriptive and interpretive phenomenology is sometimes oversimplified by researchers in the professional disciplines. Heidegger argued that all description is always already interpretation. Every form of human understanding is interpretive.

Linguistic phenomenology includes the French poststructuralist work of Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault, even though the latter denied that he was a phenomenologist. Basic terms of linguistic phenomenology are *textual autonomy, signification, intertextuality, deconstruction, the outside, discourse,* and *space of the text.* The work of Foucault on the nature of language and discourse contributes to certain explorations of the relation between understanding, culture, historicality, identity, and human life. But it is especially in the work of Derrida and colleagues such as Hélène Cixous, where we can speak of a radical linguistic phenomenology.

Ethical phenomenology is exemplified in the work of Max Scheler, but later with the thinking of Emmanuel Levinas and his translator Alphonso Lingis. Basic terms of ethical phenomenology are *otherness, responsibility, I-Thou, the face,* and *(non)relationality.* Ethical phenomenology received its first impetus especially by Max Scheler in his study *The Nature of Sympathy.* For Levinas, the Husserlian focus on the essence of things and Heidegger's preoccupation with the modalities of being in the world all are manifestations of the primacy of being, self, or mineness in traditional philosophical phenomenology. For a truly profound understanding of human reality one must not only ask for the meaning of being or presence, but also for the meaning of what is otherwise than being: alterity or the infinite. Levinas finds the phenomenological power of this question in the encounter with the face of the other.

Phenomenology of Practice

Since the mid-1990s, phenomenology has been widely imported into the practical, applied, or professional disciplines such as the health sciences, education, clinical psychology, and pedagogical disciplines. Within these professional fields, phenomenology has a somewhat different history than most other qualitative research approaches. For example, action research developed from within the field of sociology and had a distinct and critical–political social agenda; ethnography emerged as a distinct anthropological field research method. In North America, phenomenology seeped into the professional fields in part via ethnomethodology, ethnography, interpretive sociology, and other such social science streams and in part through pockets of interest such as humanistic psychology, the work of existential psychology, and educational studies and pedagogy. Phenomenological inquiries have become attractive because they offer an alternative to managerial, instrumental, and technological ways of understanding knowledge, and they lead to more ethically and experientially sensitive epistemologies and ontologies of practice.

Before there was any significant interest in phenomenology in North America, a unique experiment had taken place in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, and France. For example, the University of Utrecht School can be considered a

genuinely original contribution to the international discussion about phenomenology in the professions. It consisted of an assortment of phenomenologically oriented psychologists, educators, pedagogues, pediatricians, sociologists, criminologists, jurists, psychiatrists, and other medical doctors who formed a more or less close association of like-minded academic and professional practitioners. Scholars such as the psychiatrist J. H van den Berg wrote among other things about the changing nature of childhood; the pedagogue-philosopher O. F. F. Bollnow wrote on the pedagogical atmosphere; M. J. Langeveld established the field of phenomenological pedagogy; the medical doctor F. J. J. Buytendijk produced numerous studies on topics such as pain, human movement, touch, and obsessive compulsiveness.

The practical phenomenological psychology of Amadeo Georgi and Clark E. Moustakas was inspired by the Dutch school. In education, phenomenology was introduced through the writings of Maxine Greene and Max van Manen and in the health sciences through the works of Patricia Benner and Kay Toombs, and so on.

In recent years, further developments in phenomenological methodology, as originally inspired by continental scholars, are found in all the major professional disciplines. These phenomenological methods share a concern with the concrete particulars of everyday life, but they are now more sensitive to subjective and intersubjective roots of meaning, to the complexity of relations between language and experience, to the cultural and gendered contexts of interpretive meaning, and to the textual dimensions of phenomenological writing and reflection. The growing interest in the relevance of such phenomenological methodologies for research and the knowledge base of professional practices attests to the vitality of concerns with reflective interpretation and experiencing sensitive understanding.

Concepts of Phenomenology

It has been said that a proper understanding of phenomenology can be gained only through doing it. Phenomenological understanding needs to be practiced as method, and identified as a style of thinking—a manner of orienting to experience as we live through it.

Within the discipline of philosophy, phenomenology is practiced through the methods of the reduction. And as a human science, phenomenology has imported an additional variety of empirical data gathering techniques and reflective methods. It explores ways of doing research that remain focused on and sensitive to the concrete, subjective, and prereflective dimensions of the lifeworld.

Different phenomenologists such as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Derrida agree that phenomenological understanding is achieved through language. A good phenomenological text can make us suddenly "see" something in a manner that enriches our understanding of everyday life experience and may transform our practices. But phenomenological reflection also runs up against the limits of language. The production of insight must proceed through the creation of a research text that speaks to our cognitive and noncognitive sensibilities. Thus, phenomenological understanding is distinctly existential, emotive, enactive, embodied, situational, and nontheoretic. A powerful phenomenological text thrives on a certain irrevocable tension between what is unique and what is shared, between particular and transcendent meaning, between what can be thought and what remains unthought, and between the reflective and the prereflective spheres of the lifeworld.

Lived Experience

The term *lived experience* derives from the German *erlebnis*—experience as we live through it and recognize it as a particular type of experience. It could be argued that human experience is the main epistemological basis for many other qualitative research traditions, but the concept of lived experience possesses special methodological significance for phenomenology. The notion of lived experience, as used in the works of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and like-minded phenomenologists, announces the intent to explore directly the original or prereflective dimensions of human existence.

Our language can be seen as an immense linguistic map that names the possibilities of human lived experiences. The value of phenomenology is that it prioritizes and investigates how the human being experiences the world: how the patient experiences illness, how the teacher experiences the pedagogical encounter, how the student experiences a moment of success or failure, and how we experience novel ways of interacting with others and the world through computer mediated devices, social network technologies,

new media, and so forth. Every lived experience (phenomenon) can become a topic for phenomenological inquiry. The phenomenological attitude keeps us reflectively attentive to the ways human beings live through experiences in the immediacy of the present that is only recoverable as an elusive past.

Phenomenology is interested in recovering the living moment of the now—even before we put language to it or describe it in words. Or to say this differently, phenomenology tries to show how our words, concepts, and theories always shape (distort) and give structure to our experiences as we live them. But the living moment of the present is always already absent in our effort to return to it. For example, it is one thing to get lost in a novel, but it is another to retrospectively capture what happened to us, just now, as we slipped into this textual space and began to dwell in the story. Similarly, we may identify and rate with empirical descriptors the nature and intensity of various forms of pain, but the actual moment of being struck by pain or the lingering discomfort of suffering pain somehow seem to be beyond words as we try to retrospectively appropriate the experience. These experiences can be described, but ultimately the meaning of the primal experience is beyond propositional discourse.

Lifeworld

The lifeworld is the pregiven world, the existent world as we find ourselves in it. Husserl described the lifeworld as the "world of immediate experience," the world as "already there," the world as experienced in the "natural, primordial attitude." He distinguished between our theoretical attitude to life, as borrowed from the Greeks, and our natural pretheoretical attitude to life on which all science and theorizing is based and from which all theorizing is ultimately derived. Husserl employs the term *natural* for what is original and naive, prior to critical or theoretical reflection.

Each lifeworld shows certain pervading structures or styles that can be explored phenomenologically. Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann elaborated this notion in a sociological direction in their book *Structures of the Life-world.* We could examine how the lifeworld of the child has different experiential qualities from the lifeworld of the adult. Each of us may be seen to inhabit different lifeworlds at different times of the day, such as the lived world of work and the lived world of home. Moreover, lifeworlds intersect and are partly nested within each other. Heidegger gave to the idea of lifeworld an even more worldly, existential thrust by speaking of phenomenology as the study of being, the study of our modes-of-being or ways-of-being-in-the-world. Ludwig Wittgenstein's notion of "form of life" and "language games" can be understood as a more linguistic approach to the idea of lifeworld.

The Reduction

It is impossible to understand transcendental phenomenological method without understanding the meaning and significance of the reduction. *Reduction* is the technical term that describes the phenomenological device of bracketing (épochè) that permits us to discover the experiential surge of the lifeworld. The aim of the reduction is to reachieve a direct and primal contact with the world as we experience it rather than as we conceptualize it. But the discovery of the prereflective lifeworld through the technique of the reduction always transcends the lifeworld—when we bracket lived experience, we experience meaning. The reduction is meant to bring the aspects of meaning that belong to the phenomena of our lifeworld into nearness. In particular it aims to bring into focus the uniqueness of the phenomenon to which we are oriented.

The method of human science is never simply a matter of procedure, whether simple procedures or advanced procedures. Rather the reduction refers to a certain thoughtfulness. To come to an understanding of the unique meaning and significance of something we need to reflect on it by practicing a careful attentiveness. The term *reduction* is somewhat misleading since reduction—the ambition to make reflection emulate the unreflective life of consciousness—is ironically a protest against reductionism. So how then is reflection supposed to emulate lived experience? Of course, the emulator is language, and the process of emulating is performed through writing, and the intent of writing is to produce textual portrayals that resonate the kinds of meanings that we seem to recognize in prereflective experience.

There exist many philosophical investigations and explications of the reduction that can make this topic complex and confusing. That is not surprising in view of the fact that the project of phenomenology can be understood in a variety of ways. Here several levels of

reduction may be distinguished for their methodological usefulness: wonder or heuristic reduction, openness or hermeneutic reduction, concreteness or phenomenological reduction, universality in contingency or eidetic reduction, and flexible rationality or methodological reduction. Each of these dimensions of the reduction needs to be practiced as if in concert.

Human Science Methods

The reduction is the method central to the phenomenological study of the lifeworld; however, in the work of more ontologically oriented phenomenologists, the reduction does not bracket the phenomenon away from the world, but rather it restores the contextual and always already existing meaningfulness of the world.

As phenomenology was adopted by various disciplines associated with professional practices, empirical and reflective methods were imported that are derived from the humanities and the social sciences. Empirical methods such as interviewing, observation, eliciting written descriptions, and borrowing from literary and artistic sources are now used to gather experiential material. These data are best collected in the form of descriptions of lived-through moments, experiential anecdotal accounts, remembered stories of particular experiences, narrative fragments, and fictional experiences. Thus, phenomenological experiential accounts should not be confused with opinions, interpretations, views, or explanations of certain phenomena.

Phenomenological inquiry cannot be formalized into a series of technical procedures. However, a variety of data gathering activities may be identified that can help in doing phenomenological inquiry. These activities fall into two types: empirical and reflective methods.

Empirical Methods

Our personal life experiences are immediately accessible to us in a way that no one else's are. However, the phenomenologist does not want to trouble the reader with purely private, autobiographical facticities of his or her life. In drawing up personal descriptions of lived experiences, the phenomenologist knows that the patterns of meaning of one's own experiences are also the possible experiences of others and therefore may be recognizable by others. By conducting a personal description of a lived experience, the researcher aims to describe a phenomenon as much as possible in concrete and lived-through terms. In other words, the focus is on the direct description of a particular situation or event as it is lived through without offering causal explanations or interpretive generalizations.

In the various strands and disciplines in the social and human sciences, the interview serves differing purposes. For example, ethnographic interviews study cultural practices and meanings. Survey or opinion interviews study the ways people perceive or feel about certain issues, their beliefs, views, and so forth. In the context of phenomenological research there are, broadly speaking, two types of interview: The phenomenological interview is used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential material. The hermeneutic interview is used to explore interpretive meaning aspects of lived experience material.

Sometimes, the best way to enter a person's lifeworld is to participate in it. For example, to gain access to the experience of young children, it may be important to play with them and follow them into their play spaces. Participatory and close observation generates different forms of experiential material than is obtained through written or interview approaches. Observational method may require that one be a participant and an observer at the same time, maintaining an orientation of reflectivity while guarding against the more manipulative and artificial attitude that a reflective attitude tends to insert in a social situation and relation.

Fictional literature, such as novels and short stories, is sometimes an excellent source for experiential material. The phenomenological value of a novel, for example, is determined by what may be called the perceptiveness and the intuitive sensitivity of the author. Phenomena such as love, grief, illness, faith, success, fear, death, hope, struggle, or loss are the stuff of which novels are made. Through an experientially powerful novel, then, one is given the chance of living through an experience that provides the opportunity of gaining insight into certain aspects of the human condition.

Reflective Methods

Whereas empirical methods aim to explore the range and varieties of prereflective experiential material that is appropriate for the phenomenon under

study, reflective methods aim to interpret the aspects of meaning or meaningfulness that are associated with this phenomenon and that assist with the reduction.

Phenomenological reflection aims to perceive the meanings of human experiences; and in a sense, it is something everyone does constantly in everyday life. For example, when we meet a friend, we do not just perceive a man or a woman. We see a person who differs from other men and women precisely in that respect that makes us relate and talk to this person as a friend.

But what is much more difficult is to come to a reflective determination and explication of what a friend is. This determination and explication of meaning then is the more difficult task of phenomenological reflection. A perhaps more notorious illustration of this difficulty concerns the experience of time. What could be more easily grasped than time? We regulate our lives by time. We carry the time around on our wrist. We divide the day into morning, afternoon, evening, and nighttime. We reflect on past time and anticipate the time to come. We even talk about the time going by, sometimes quickly and at other times more slowly. And yet when someone asks us, "What is time anyway?" we are quickly at our wit's end to describe it. What is it that goes by fast or slowly when we say that the time is elapsing? How does our sense of time change as we become more continuously and immediately accessible to each other through mobile devices and the internet? So there is a difference between our prereflective lived understanding of the meaning of time and a self-reflective grasp of the phenomenological structure of the lived meaning of time. To get at the latter is a reflective and often laborious task, involving a process of reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit thematic aspects of meaning of the lived experience.

Our lived experiences and the structures of meanings (themes) in terms of which these lived experiences can be described and interpreted constitute the immense complexity of the lifeworld. Existential themes that may prove especially helpful as guides for reflection in the research process include lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality). We can always ask about any experience the fundamental questions that correspond to such lifeworld existentials. Therefore, spatiality, corporeality, temporality, relationality, and alterity are productive categories for the process of phenomenological questioning, reflecting, and writing.

Catherine Adams and Max van Manen

See also Hermeneutics; Lived Experience

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Photographs in Qualitative Research

Photographs, along with other visual representations such as drawings, cartoons, videos, and even color swatches, play a variety of roles in qualitative research because they offer a visual medium in addition to the more common verbal medium. They complement the spoken word and often enable a richer, more holistic understanding of research participants' worlds as well as often act as stimuli, for example, in the development of advertising, packaging, brand development, and corporate imagery.

Broadly, photographs can have a role in two aspects of research. They can be a form of data gathered from research participants and initiated either by the researcher or by the research participants. Alternatively, they can be used as a stimulus that is provided by the researcher to act as a prompt or as a focus of discussion. However, these two aspects are not discrete and often overlap. For example, material provided by the researcher can be elaborated and