CHAPTER 19

An Introduction to Phenomenological Research in Psychology

Historical, Conceptual, and Methodological Foundations

SCOTT D. CHURCHILL AND FREDERICK J. WERTZ

IN THIS CHAPTER, we begin with the historical and conceptual background of phenomenological psychology. We then highlight some of the major methodological principles that guide phenomenological research in psychology. After a discussion of procedures that typically are involved in empirical research, we illustrate the orientation by describing a particular application of these methods.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During the early 1900s, Edmund Husserl began to develop a "philosophy as rigorous science" called phenomenology. Husserl believed that if science were to fulfill its mission of providing rational knowledge that would enable humanity to freely shape its own destiny, then science must go beyond an exclusive focus on the physical world and learn to take human experience into consideration with equal rigor. Husserl recognized from the beginning that his work, although primarily philosophical, had important implications for the discipline of psychology, the positive science that studies the experience of individual persons. Husserl believed that psychology, in its efforts to achieve scientific status by imitating the physical sciences, had not secured a proper conceptual foundation and methodology for its unique subject matter. Following Dilthey (1924/1977a), he asserted that description rather than explanation would be the best means for identifying essential constituents of conscious experience. Husserl provided an incisive critique of natural science psychology and delineated a positive alternative of a science that would

provide more faithful knowledge of individuals' human experience. Husserl's work, and the 20th-century intellectual movement to which it gave rise, contributed to the larger ongoing effort to offer a science that is truly humanistic in the sense of being designed with a sensitivity to the special qualities of human experience as a subject matter.

On the basis of Husserl's work, European philosophers such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty pioneered phenomenological studies of existence (i.e., phenomenological ontology) and, therefore, are known as *existential-phenomenologists.* Psychology continued to occupy a central position in this movement. Sartre's first studies were psychological in nature—on human emotions and imagination—and throughout his career, Sartre continued to produce psychological biographies that he called *existential psychoanalyses*(e.g., Sartre, 1952/1963). Merleau-Ponty, who held the chair of child psychology at the Sorbonne that subsequently was occupied by Piaget, focused on neurophysiology, behavior, perception, intelligence, cognition, sexuality, and other psychological topics (e.g., Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, 1942/1963). Although European psychologists—particularly those of the Gestalt orientation—appropriated the phenomenological viewpoint, the European psychiatrists who applied it to clinical psychology were the first to capture the attention of American psychologists.

Even before American figures such as Murray, Allport, Snygg, and Combs would begin to develop what became known as *personalistic* or *personological* approaches during the 1930s and 1940s, psychiatrists in Europe were reading the texts of Dilthey, Husserl, and Heidegger with great care. Jaspers, influenced both by Husserl and by Dilthey's idea of a *verstehende* psychology (based on *understanding* rather than on explanation), developed a "general psychopathology" (Jaspers, 1913/1963) that offered a descriptive phenomenology of hallucinations, delusions, dreams, expressions, motor activity, and gestures as well as a comprehensive approach to characterology and "the person as a whole." Husserl's phenomenology eventually would find its way into the psychiatric writings of Binswanger (1963), Minkowski, (1970), von Gebsattel (1954, 1958), and even Straus (1966). It finally was Heidegger's (1927/1962) analysis of human *Dasein* that gave psychiatry its most radical reorientation by providing a new anthropology on the basis of which to understand both the human person and the pathologies of existence. Psychiatrists had now found a viable paradigm that could take them beyond the description of mental states to the Gestalt "existence" within which consciousness finds its source and origin (for further elaboration, see Binswanger, 1963; Keen, 1970; Spiegelberg, 1972; van den Berg, 1972).

Psychologists such as May, Allport, Rogers, Laing, Szasz, Frankl, Fromm, Moustakas, and Bugental likewise made extensive use of European existential thinking. Concepts such as freedom, alienation, the facticity of death, estrangement of self from other, the falling into "inauthenticity," the possibility of becoming an "authentic self," ontological guilt, and the experience of nothingness were incorporated into their clinical psychology and into their critical analyses of modern Western culture. This trend was associated more with human service than with formal research. Its representatives have devoted themselves to healing the lost souls, that is, the "hollow" men and women of our time who have lost touch with themselves, their fellow men and women, and their sense of wonder about existence (see, e.g., Churchill, 2000).

Although Van Kaam was a counseling psychologist interested primarily in spiritual formation, he wrote convincingly that all psychology, not just clinical psychology, must acknowledge existential foundations (Van Kaam, 1966). Having developed the first "empirical psychophenomenological method" while conducting doctoral research on "the experience of really feeling understood" (Van Kaam, 1959), he delineated an existential-anthropological framework of understanding that could bring theoretical unity to the fragmented discipline of psychology and helped to set up a program at Duquesne University that aimed to apply phenomenological methods to the full spectrum of psychological subject matter (Van Kaam, 1966, 1987). Giorgi, having been trained to conduct experimental research on perception, played the key role of articulating the need for a "human science" foundation for the entire discipline of psychology and in developing empirical research methods that have been applied to a broad diversity of subject matter (Wertz & Aanstoos, 1999). By the late 1990s, former students and associates of the Duquesne circle were teaching at approximately 50 colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada. (For prototypic and exemplary research, see Aanstoos, 1984; Churchill, 1984/1993, 1998; Colaizzi, 1973, 1978; Giorgi, 1975, 1985; Giorgi et al., 1971-1983; Fischer, 1974, 1978, 1985; Valle, 1998; Valle & Halling, 1989; Van Kaam, 1959, 1966; von Eckartsberg, 1971, 1986; Wertz, 1982, 1987; Wertz & Aanstoos, 1999; see also Pollio, Henley, & Thompson's [1998] independent yet kindred work.)

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The contribution of phenomenology to the foundations of the positive sciences followed from Husserl's (1900/1970) passionate call, "We must go back to the 'things themselves'!" (*zu den Sachen selbst!*). One implication of this statement is that the basic concepts and methodology of each science must rigorously target the essential characteristics of its subject matter. It also means that the concrete affairs (Sachen) of everyday life should provide the basis for philosophical reflection. One of the original aims of phenomenology was to complement and contextualize empirical scientific investigations by clarifying the "essence" of regions of study such as nature, animal life, and human psychic life (Husserl, 1952/1989). Such a clarification, Husserl reasoned, would be propaedeutic to any objective inquiries made at the empirical level. Each science must respond to the unique demands of its subject matter. Phenomenologists have insisted that humans are radically different from physical and animal nature and that, therefore, treating humans according to the concepts and methods of natural science is unscientific.

Intentionality

Fundamental for any research that attempts to address everyday life is an adequate conception of consciousness, which Husserl (1913/1962) put forward in the notion of *intentionality*. Whereas a nonhuman thing has a "nature" that resides within itself, consciousness always is consciousness of something other than itself. Experience must be grasped holistically as a relationship in which the subject relates to an object through its *meaning*. In perceiving, a perceiver relates to the perceived; for example, water is presented to the thirsty person as a drink, whereas it is presented to the dishwashing person as a cleaner. These are *objectively experienced meanings* of the water. Intentionality is a relational phenom-

enon, wherein consciousness and object together constitute one irreducible totality. Phenomenological psychology recognizes the intentionality of all lived experiences including perception, imagination, volition, expectation, remembering, thinking, feeling, and social behavior. These are understood as human potentials or aptitudes for relating to the meanings of our situations.

The concept of intentionality does not imply that the various modes of experience are lived through in a clear and explicit way, let alone reflected on by the person. On the contrary, it acknowledges inexactitude and vagueness in the individual's relations with his or her situations. The concept of intentionality expresses the structural and dynamic relationship of self and world, thereby liberating our conceptions of psychic life from traditional philosophical prejudices that place it "inside" the individual, separate from an "outside" objective reality. Sartre (1947/1970) expressed this point rather dramatically:

> If, impossible though it [may] be, you could enter "into" a consciousness, you would be seized by a whirlwind and thrown back outside, in the thick of the dust, near the tree, for consciousness has no "inside." It is just this being beyond itself . . ., this refusal to be a substance which makes it a consciousness. (pp. 3-4)

The Life-World

As we move from simple experiential acts to more extended social, life historical involvements, we continue to find the person's illuminating presence to a meaningful transcendent world. These meanings are different for each unique individual, although they are built on and share many common sociocultural structures such as language. A faithful interrogation of any human experience shows that it is not an isolated event but rather is, according to its immanent structure, a moment of the ongoing social relation between a whole "personality" and the "world" that can be spoken about or revealed through language. The large order unity, outside of which no single human activity can be understood, is referred to by phenomenologists as the *life-world* (*Lebenswelt*), which provides the foundation for all scientific inquiries.

> To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always *speaks,* and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign language, as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie, or a river is. (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. ix)

One of the fundamental characteristics of the life-world is its spatiality, which includes a "referential totality" of equipment, cultural objects, natural objects, other people, and institutions, each of which mutually implies and is inextricably bound up with all the others (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Within this essential context, persons unfold collectively and individually through sharing and each finding and creating his or her own way. This world also always involves temporality, an immanent teleology in which the present, rooted in and retaining a determinate past, determines, acts into, and opens onto an ever uncertain future. From birth to death, humans participate actively in and also are vulnerable to and passively caught up in this world that profoundly transcends them. Yet, each person experiences this world in its meaningful relevance to his or her individual "projects" (i.e., personal goals, interests, and desires), making it one's own world (*Eigenwelt*).

The complexity of the life-world is the basis of the diversity of theories, and in rela-

tion to it, each theory is partial. Psychoanalysis emphasizes the rootedness of existence in past affective familial relations, behaviorism emphasizes the instrumentality of embodied comportment and its contingent consequences, cognitive psychology emphasizes the calculatedly organizing contribution of the individual, and constructivist theory emphasizes the constitutive role of society and culture. Each of these features of the life-world is significant and powerful enough to give the impression of being a sole determinant, yet holistic phenomenological conceptualization shows that each is implicitly dependent on all of the others and is nothing apart from the whole in which they are equiprimordial and co-essential. Priority must be given to the total life-world over any of the partial aspects stressed by one theory or another. The past cannot operate without a present and a future; the family cannot be understood apart from the culture and the individual; instrumental behavior cannot be understood apart from the meaningful cognition of the situation; calculation cannot be understood apart from embodiment, affect, and conation; and social construction cannot be understood apart form the inherencies of embodied meaning. Phenomenological psychology aims to incorporate those achievements of other schools of psychology that genuinely describe aspects of human existence, thereby integrating the diverse emphases that appear contradictory when theoretically abstracted from the life-world and postulated as mutually exclusive determinants.

AN EMPIRICAL METHODOLOGY FOR PSYCHOLOGY

Phenomenological research consists of four discernible (although not necessarily sequential) moments: formulation of the research question, intuitive contact with the phenomenon, reflective analysis of qualitative data, and psychological description.

Formulation of the Research Question

Like all research, phenomenological research begins with the judgment that our state of knowledge is in some way inadequate or limited. For example, fragmentary or contradictory theories, inconsistent findings, problematic methods, or a scarcity of research about a particular subject matter motivates research. Phenomenological research is appropriate when an assessment of the literature leads to the conclusion that knowledge is *not sufficiently descriptive* or *not sufficiently grounded* in a faithful intimate description of the subject matter and that such a description or grounding will better our knowledge. Husserl contended that *eidetic* inquiry (i.e., investigations of the "essence" of a phenomenon) should come first so as to guide empirical inquiry (i.e., collection and analysis of "facts" about a phenomenon) because a clarified understanding of *what one is studying* is needed so as to target which *variable aspects* require investigation. Phenomenological questions are those that ask about the meaning or essence of something people live through, that is, about its basic constituents and types, how it unfolds or evolves over time, and so on.

Intuitive Contact With the Phenomenon

To engage in phenomenological reflection on a given phenomenon, an *intuitive* relationship is needed between the researcher and the research participant—*direct existential contact*. Intuitive means that the phenomenon is directly accessible to the researcher's own consciousness. Evidence for psychological insight can be

obtained from all forms of expression—verbal testimony, written protocols, observed behavior, gestures and drawings, artworks, cultural artifacts, and even media representations. In each case, the phenomenological approach brings the researcher into direct personal contact with the psychological event being studied. Only when such personal access has been facilitated can the researcher begin to acquaint himself or herself with the essence of the event.

Early phenomenological investigations consisted of researchers reflecting on their own experience. This method remains invaluable and is encouraged with a full accounting in phenomenological research projects. More recent efforts also have devised procedures for making other people's mental lives systematically accessible in research. For example, the participant may be invited to express an event that he or she already has lived through or to provide a simultaneous description of an ongoing experience. The researcher may indicate a type of life event and ask the participant to provide a descriptive account of an actual example. It is important that such a description discloses the contours of a particular experience as it occurs or may be relived in remembering with a minimum of scientific rubric, generalization, speculation, explanation or anything not immanent to the original concrete event. This becomes part of what Giorgi (1976) referred to as "the ideal of presuppositionless description," which implies that "one does not use language derived from explanatory systems or models in the initial description but [rather] everyday, naive language" (p. 311). An open-ended contact with everyday life is preferred over experiments or questionnaires. The researcher often will explicitly ask for full detail of an event as well as what led up to and followed it. Descriptions may be solicited from the person who lived through the phenomenon himself or herself or from an "other" who observed someone living through that phenomenon. Descriptions may be simultaneous (as in "think-aloud" protocols) or retrospective. More detailed description may be gained through interviewing, for a description that does not include the whole existential context might conceal the significance of the phenomenon (Kvale, 1983). Ultimately, questions directed toward research participants are intended to obtain enough elaboration of the subtle details of their experience to facilitate the researcher's own imaginative "taking up" and "re-living" of the original experience—a taking up that makes possible a subsequent intuition into the immanent meanings of the experience under investigation.

The researcher's first step is to read and reread the description(s) so as to begin grasping the sense of the whole. This empathic intuition and intensive amplification of the reality of what the participant described, with the researcher calling on all of his or her powers of understanding so as to sensitively share in the participant's living, is the first moment of phenomenological method. "It is one of the most demanding operations, which requires utter concentration on the object intuited without becoming absorbed in it to the point of no longer looking critically" (Spiegelberg, 1983, p. 682). By means of this resonating attunement, one begins to understand the other's position and the rich meanings of the situation described. In "trading places" (Husserl, 1952/1989), the researcher can begin to acquaint himself or herself with the essential meanings and organization of the experience. The phenomenologist aims to make the participant's involvement the phenomenologist's own by co-performing it in the reading. While striving to project himself or herself into the situation described so as to "reexperience" it (Dilthey, 1927/

1977b), the researcher maintains a critical presence, which will serve the subsequent reflective analysis.

Reflective Analysis of Qualitative Data

The analytic phase of the research consists of furthering the intuitive presence to the participant's description by apprehending the individual moments of his or her experience in relation to the whole. In phenomenological reflection, theories, hypotheses, previous explanations, and other preconceptions about the phenomenon are bracketed or held in abeyance. Phenomenology has been defined etymologically by Heidegger (1927/1962) as letting "that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (p. 58). The researcher's posture in this "letting show itself" also has been described as noninterference, open-minded generosity, wonder, and even *love*. The researcher lets his or her understanding be informed by the protocol rather than be dictated on the basis of assumptions and preconceptions.

The phenomenological researcher brackets questions and concerns about "what really happened" in the situation described and focuses on the *meanings* of the situation as experienced by the participant. There is a turning from "given facts" to "intended meanings"—from the simple "givenness" of the situation in the participant's experience to a reflective apprehension of the meaning of that situation for the person. Descriptive data generally present life situations in a matter-of-fact rendition in which the person's constitutive role and many important meanings may be highly implicit. The phenomenological reduction places into relief what common sense takes for granted (Natanson, 1973, p. 58). The turn from facts to meanings is a turning from naive description to a psychological reflection in which co-constituted meanings are brought to light.

The researcher openly reflects on the present data, contemplating the participant's description in a way that allows segments of what is described to be discerned (but not separated) as moments of the participant's experience. Analysis consists of "the distinguishing of the constituents of the phenomenon as well as the exploration of their relations to and connections with adjacent phenomena" (Spiegelberg, 1983, p. 691). The researcher moves dialectically from part to whole, and then back again to individual parts from a sense of the whole, in an effort to discern and comprehend those *relationships* in which one finds the psychological significance that speaks to the researcher's questions in a relevant way.

To the extent that the constituent immanent meanings that fulfill the researcher's interests are not obvious or clearly stated in the original description, the process of analysis involves "explicitation" (Giorgi, 1970). Phenomenological reflection strives to be eidetic, that is, to distinguish essential facts from accidental or incidental facts. It is not just any constituent, implicit dimension, relation among aspects, or pervasive orientation that reflection seeks to apprehend but rather those that constitute the essential or invariant meaning and structure of the experience. Each individual protocol is analyzed in its own right, yielding what have been called *individual psychological structures* or descriptions of individual instances of the researched phenomenon. These descriptions, insofar as they are truly structural, involve the researcher's seeing connections among the various moments described within the protocol and formulating an integrative account of the individual's experience.

Phenomenological analysis may strive for varying levels of generality, depending on the aim of the research, ranging from a unique individual to the typical, general, or even universal individual. Constituent meanings essential to a particular experience—say, a particular instance of learning—might not be universal but rather characteristic of one of the types. The attainment of various levels of generality, as well as knowledge of what is unique in a particular case, requires qualitative comparisons of different individual cases, real and imagined, in which the researcher strives to intuit convergences and divergences and, thereby, gains essential insight into relative levels of generality (i.e., a structural understanding of individual, typical, and universal features).

Psychological Description

Having intuited a sense of the research participant's lived experience, and having then gone back to the particulars of the participant's description so as to flesh out a sense of the psychological significance and coherence of the experience, the researcher then proceeds to the final task, psychological description, which expresses the actual findings of the reflections. During this phase, the researcher expresses his or her insights in an integrative statement that conveys the coherent structure of the psychic life under consideration—its various constituents (e.g., temporal phases) and their relations within the whole. The descriptive phase occurs when the researcher is ready to thematize and put into words what has been experienced vicariously, but nonetheless intuitively, within the researcher's taking up of the participant's experience (Dilthey, 1927/1977b, p. 130; see also Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 353). Here, the researcher no longer is limited to the participant's words but rather chooses those that best capture the participant's psychology.

By taking notes as the analysis proceeds, the researcher may keep track of his or her ongoing thoughts, and these informal tentative reflections are the roots of the final understanding expressed in the research report. Ideally, all statements in the descriptions that are relevant to the research problem are represented in the researcher's psychological statements, and all of the researcher's statements have evidence intuitively provided in the data. The implications of the new knowledge may then be drawn out including how it helps to resolve theoretical controversies, empirical questions, and/or practical problems.

AN ILLUSTRATIVE APPLICATION

To illustrate phenomenological research in psychology, we offer a study conducted by the second author with Constance Fischer because it remains one of the most explicit accounts of the use of these methods and little theoretical background is needed to understand the research (Wertz, 1983, 1985). This project, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, focused on the experience of crime victims. The research problem was twofold. To date, there had been no thorough, systematic, and descriptive account of the experience of crime victims. Research had focused on victims' attempts to reduce violence in criminals, characteristics that evoked helping behavior by others, the experience of victims by others, and various disparate themes without any integrated understanding of the overall organization and temporal progression of the victims' experience itself. Our research also had the practical goal of providing a series of public forums in which victims, police, justice system personnel, and governmental policy makers would

gain greater understanding of the plight of crime victims.

Working with a police department in the greater Pittsburgh area in Pennsylvania, five researchers interviewed a total of 50 individuals who had reported crimes against themselves (excluding rape). These interviews ranged from 40 to 90 minutes, beginning with instructions such as the following: "I would like to understand your experience of the crime you reported. Please begin before it happened and describe the events that occurred, including as much as you can remember." Interviewers used a person-centered listening approach in the collection of data, limiting questions to requests for clarification, filling in gaps, and seeking greater detail. An interview was concluded when the interviewer and participant both agreed that everything the participant lived through in connection with the victimization had been described.

The interviews were prepared for analysis in a series of steps. After an interview was transcribed (ranging from 8 to 30 pages), the researchers read the transcript openly. To be sure that the researchers gave due attention to every bit of data, they differentiated the interview into "meaning units" or portions of the text that pertained to a single theme or moment of the experience. Each tended to be from one to about three sentences in the participant's language. The meaning units then were ordered chronologically, redundancy and irrelevancy were eliminated, and the participant's own words were arranged so that they formed a first-person narrative. Each of these *individual phenomenal descriptions* (ranging from 5 to 20 pages) was a description of the phenomenal experience of an individual instance of victimization. In one of these, for example, a participant whom we called "Marlene" described going home after work as a waitress. Here is a very abbreviated summary of Marlene's description, which was about 10 pages:

> Marlene noticed that a car behind her pulled into the driveway of her apartment building and assumed that it was a neighbor. When she approached her building's steps and looked over her shoulder to see why she hadn't heard the other car's door close, she was assailed by a man who "must have flown" to her from the car, whose door was still open and contained another male passenger. As the man came upon her, Marlene tried to offer him her purse, but he grabbed her and tried to throw her over his shoulder. She imagined being hurt and even killed by him, determined to fight, screamed, and held onto the railing. After a struggle, when a neighbor opened her window and yelled Marlene's name, the assailant released her, ran to the car and drove away. Marlene was terrified for weeks, wondering who the man was, [wondering] whether he knew her, and expecting him to return. Suspecting that he followed her from work and could find her there or even leaving her apartment, she fearfully remained home in bed. Unsatisfied with the care she received from her husband and refusing to let him touch her, Marlene thought her marriage would be ruined and planned to return home to her parents "for the arms." Fortunately, her husband, who had previously lacked sensitivity, "turned it soft" and became her caretaker and protector. He comforted her, installed strong locks, and eventually accompanied her to and from work. Back at work, Marlene stopped flirting with male customers, wore longer skirts, and vigilantly guarded herself against any man who looked at her "the wrong way." To her surprise, her originally continual suspicions never turned into anything, and gradually she became more secure. But her life

> was changed; she avoided going out alone at night, [she] no longer engaged affectionately with strange male customers, and her husband remained a great deal more nurturing than he had ever been before.

The researchers then began the psychological analysis of each individual instance by reflecting on each meaning unit in order. The basic attitude of the researchers was one of empathy, dwelling with and magnifying each detail of the experience and concentrating on the meaning of the situation as it was experienced by the participant. In considering each meaning unit, the researchers reflected on its relevance for the psychology of the victim's experience as expressed in the protocol, aimed to grasp implicit meanings, distinguished different moments or constituents of meaning, considered the relationship of each meaning unit to each other and to the whole, identified recurrent meanings, imaginatively varied the case so as to discern what was essential to its meaning, and put the findings of these reflections into language. The *individual psychological structure* of each instance of victimization thereby generated was several times longer than the participant's original description.

The individual psychological structure of Marlene's experience was both seen and described as consisting of five temporal phases presented in a highly abbreviated form in the following paragraphs. In this type of research, one often strives for an "isomorphism" between the lived experience and the psychological account of that experience, hence the term *structure*.

1. Before victimization, Marlene experienced the world as safe, meaning that she could pursue her end of going home after work as a free agent. Others were experienced as a relatively harmonious community, as exemplified by her flirting with strangers at work and interpreting the car following her as a neighbor. Victimization in this phase was merely an unthematized possibility.

2. The actual experience of victimization occurred through a very subtle process, beginning with what Marlene called her "fear over my shoulder" that arose when she did not hear the other car's door close. It culminated in a new existential organization involving Marlene's perception of a detrimental other, the absence of any helpful community, and vulnerability—the loss of her own agency in the situation. This new experiential organization initially was fraught with uncertainty, surprise, and shock ("What does he want from me?") but quickly was filled in by Marlene's imagination of being raped, murdered, or "messed up so bad it's not worth living."

3. An active struggle ensued so as to overturn this new existential organization. Marlene tried to overcome her confusion and shock by swift understanding. She saw the car door open and anticipated being kidnapped and never seen again. She tried to offer the other money in lieu of herself, imagined a host of terrible possibilities, and resolved to resist. She held onto the rail and screamed, thereby reasserting her agency, countering the other's detrimentality, and summoning helpful community. This effort, along with her neighbor's response, was successful in bringing the actual victimization to an end as the detrimental other took flight.

4. The experience of victimization, however, was not over. Marlene continued to live through each of its constituents—the detrimentality of others, the absence of helpful community, and the loss of personal power. In this light, many things in her world changed their meanings. The ring of the phone or a knock on the door "sent [her] through the ceiling" because she "was sure

it was him." Her sense of her husband's insensitivity became so heightened that, after dreaming of him raping her, she would not let him touch her. Indeed, she experienced her husband in terms of both "detrimental otherness" and "absence of help." Customers at work whose company she had enjoyed became potential predators. The meanings of victimization spread throughout Marlene's world—in her life at home after the attack, in her contact with the police (who manifested the meaning of absent helpfulness), in her relations with her husband, and in returning to work. By far, the most profound, extensive, and complex experience of victimization occurred after the actual event, through multiple experiential modalities—thinking, imagining, dreaming, perceiving, and anticipating. Correlatively, Marlene's greatest struggle to overcome this new existential structure occurred after the event. Through her active efforts—including vigilant perception, avoidance and curtailment of risky behavior (e.g., flirting), the demanding of sensitivity and protection from her husband—Marlene recovered some lost personal agency and power. Customers at work proved themselves to be friendly, and her husband assured her that "I'm not the guy" and, more important, "turned it soft." These gifts from the world gradually restored the meanings of friendliness and respectful supportive community on the part of others.

5. After the victimization, the world horizon of safety and Marlene's sense of free agency were restored. Even though she no longer thinks of victimization thematically, her psychological life is changed in a host of ways that attest to the meanings of victimization. Marlene's efforts to overcome the possibility of being victimized now are habitual ways of life. She wears longer skirts, does not flirt, avoids the gazes of strange men on the street, and does not go out alone at night. Her husband escorts her often and has become much more caring. She keeps the door locked and does not keep identification in her purse. Although the meaning of these changes (among others) is the negation of victimization, they attest to its existence as an ongoing possibility. In this new order, Marlene has incorporated victimization in transcending it.

Through a series of further analytic operations, the researchers proceeded to attain a more general knowledge of victimization. First, some of the findings in individual psychological structures appeared immediately to be general. For example, the five temporal phases in Marlene's experience noted earlier and the constituents of victimization—detrimentality, loss of agency, and absent community—seemed to be quite general. This is possible because *meanings already go beyond the facts of the individual case,* to which they are not necessarily limited.

Second, explicit comparisons of different individual psychological structures yielded many commonalities. The five stages and three constituents of the core experience were found in all 50. For example, before victimization, all participants experienced events in terms of the horizon of friendly community, as did one family returning home after a vacation who saw their front door ajar and thought that it must be the neighbor's kids playing until, inside, they witnessed their house ransacked. The meaning of *detrimental other* was present in all, whether in the form of muggers, unseen and unknown robbers, or known vandals. All participants reexperienced victimization in a variety of experiential forms throughout their worlds, for example, in *dreaming* (of the "Peeping Tom" appearing one night), *anticipating* (kids on the street snatching her purse), *thinking* (about who might have

overturned the car), or *philosophizing* (it is a dog-eat-dog world, and people just let it go on that way).

Third, the researchers moved beyond the 50 instances of victimization provided by their interview data by imagining yet other possible instances of victimization and imaginatively varying the 50 instances they collected so as to arrive at an understanding of what generally is essential to the psychology of victimization. The researchers realized, in this way, that the struggle against victimization is not universal and that neither is the final phase of "recovery and integration"; one can be hurt or even killed without any restoration of agency, helpful community, or removal of detrimentality, as in repeated victimization or kidnapping with endless torture, not to mention murder. They decided to focus their research on the more typical "struggle with victimization" and elaborate how this struggle may be successful rather than to restrict their findings to what evidently is universal. To this extent, the researchers allowed their findings to be limited to the trends of their data that reflected the relatively successful recovery from victimization. Perhaps another type of psychology would be brought to light in the cases of victims who suffered repeatedly and/or were not able to recover or transcend their experience.

The researchers offered general psychological discourse in a two-page summary (Wertz, 1985, pp. 192-193), in greatly elaborated detail with deepening reflections and multiple detailed illustrations from their data (pp. 193-213), and in a form designed to provoke understanding and meaningful discussion among the lay public (Fischer & Wertz, 1979). Because of spatial limitations, here we offer only a very skeletal or distilled version of such general results without any illustrations:

On the ground of a usual situation involving a freely enacted task, in a familiar situation with the meaningful horizon of social harmony and safety, one is shocked by the emergence of victimization—an other detrimental to one's preferred situation has in the absence of helpful community made the victim prey to antithetical purposes, and the vulnerable person is relatively powerless to stop this even though it is against his/her values and will. The victim immediately struggles to overcome the disruptive shock by understanding in order to eliminate the detrimental other, to restore helpful community, and to regain the lost agency/power—thereby to return to his/her preferred situation. When this incident is over, the person continues to live in the horizon of victimization, that is, elaborates the constituent meanings in various situations through recollection, perception, anticipation, imagination, and thinking throughout his/her world. The person struggles to overcome the more broadly elaborated profiles of victimization as they now lurk, as an imminent danger, throughout his/her world at large. Through his/her own active efforts, help from others, and the world's repeated reassertion of noninterference and safety, victimization moves from being an impending actuality to being an unlikely or remote possibility within the newly restored horizon of social harmony. By so elaborating and overcoming victimization, that is, by eliminating the ongoing risk, the former victim shapes a new existence in which victimization is integrated—both conserved and surpassed. Former victims vary from one another according to the particular way victimization was surpassed; for instance, some are more self-reliant, and some are more dependent on helpful others. This new existence is

> preferred relative to victimization but not necessarily preferred over one's life before victimization. (Wertz, 1985, p. 191)

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Verifiability of phenomenological findings depends on whether another researcher can assume the perspective of the present investigator, review the original protocol data, and see that the proposed insights meaningfully illuminate the situations under study.

> Thus, the chief point to be remembered with this type of research is not so much whether another position could be adopted (this point is granted beforehand) but [rather] whether a reader, adopting the same viewpoints as [those] articulated by the researcher, can also see what the researcher saw, whether or not he/she agrees with it. That is the key criterion for qualitative research. (Giorgi, 1975, p. 96)

Posing the question of validity in absolute terms (i.e., "Is this study valid or invalid?") tends to be unfruitful. All research discloses only a limited truth, that is, a truth limited by the researcher's procedures and perspective. Phenomenological researchers attempt to articulate those limits reflectively and honestly, and additional limits may be discerned by others whose scholarship and reflections bring additional perspectives and procedures to bear. The validity of research findings, therefore, is not contingent on whether they are entirely similar to those of other viewpoints. According to the phenomenological approach, it is not possible to exhaustively know any phenomenon, and different viewpoints can be valid (Churchill, Lowery, McNally, & Rao, 1998; Wertz, 1986). In other words, other perspectives, perhaps rooted in different research interests and their corresponding intuitions, always are possible and contribute in a complementary manner to our knowledge of "the whole." In the end, the value of the findings depends on their ability to help others gain *some* insights into what has been lived unreflectively. Other insights from different viewpoints may then supplement, and thereby extend and possibly even radically decenter, what *always is essentially a partial knowledge* of human life. But this does not imply that "anything goes"; phenomenological findings must be able to be evidenced by concrete prescientific experience of oneself and others. "The main function of phenomenological description is to serve as a reliable guide to the listener's own actual or potential experience of the phenomena" (Spiegelberg, 1983, p. 694). In the end, what makes phenomenological knowledge "true" is its fidelity to experience as it is concretely lived in the life-world.

REFERENCES

Aanstoos, C. M. (Ed.). (1984). *Exploring the lived world: Readings in phenomenological psychology.* Carrollton, GA: West Georgia College.

Binswanger, L. (1963). *Being-in-the-world* (J. Needleman, Ed.). New York: Basic Books.

Churchill, S. D. (1993). Forming clinical impressions: A phenomenological study of psychodiagnostic seeing. In C. Aanstoos (Ed.), *Exploring the lived world: Read-*

ings in phenomenological psychology (West Georgia College Studies in Social Sciences, Vol. 23, pp. 67-84). Carrollton, GA: Eidos Press. (Original work published 1984)

Churchill, S. D. (1998). The intentionality of psychodiagnostic seeing: A phenomenological investigation of clinical impression formation. In R. Valle (Ed.), *Phenomenological inquiry: Existential and transpersonal dimensions* (pp. 175-207). New York: Plenum.

Churchill, S. D. (2000). Phenomenological psychology. In A. Kazdin (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of psychology* (pp. 162-168). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Churchill, S. D., Lowery, J., McNally, O., & Rao, A. (1998). The question of reliability in interpretive psychological research: A comparison of three phenomenologically-based protocol analyses. In R. Valle (Ed.), *Phenomenological inquiry: Existential and transpersonal dimensions* (pp. 63-85). New York: Plenum.

Colaizzi, P. F. (1973). *Reflection and research in psychology.* Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Colaizzi, P. F. (1978). Psychological research as the phenomenologist views it. In R. S. Valle & M. King (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological alternatives for psychology* (pp. 48-71). New York: Oxford University Press.

Dilthey, W. (1977a). Ideas concerning a descriptive and analytical psychology (R. M. Zaner, Trans.). In W. Dilthey, *Descriptive psychology and historical understanding* (pp. 23-120). The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff. (Original work published 1924)

Dilthey, W. (1977b). The understanding of other persons and their expression of life (K. L. Heiges, Trans.). In W. Dilthey, *Descriptive psychology and historical understanding* (pp. 123-144). The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff. (Original work published 1927)

Fischer, C. T., & Wertz, F. J. (1979). Empirical phenomenological analysis of being criminally victimized. In A. Giorgi, D. Smith, & R. Knowles (Eds.), *Duquesne studies in phenomenological psychology* (Vol. 3, pp. 135-158). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Fischer, W. F. (1974). On the phenomenological mode of researching "being anxious." *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 4,* 405-423.

Fischer, W. F. (1978). An empirical-phenomenological investigation of being-anxious: An example of the meanings of being-emotional. In R. S. Valle & M. King (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological alternatives for psychology* (pp. 166-181). New York: Oxford University Press.

Fischer, W. F. (1985). Self-deception: An existential-phenomenological investigation into its essential meanings. In A. Giorgi (Ed.), *Phenomenology and psychological research* (pp. 118-154). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Giorgi, A. (1970). *Psychology as a human science: A phenomenologically based approach.* New York: Harper & Row.

Giorgi, A. (1975). An application of phenomenological method in psychology. In A. Giorgi, C. Fischer, & E. Murray (Eds.), *Duquesne studies in phenomenological psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 82-103). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Giorgi, A. (1976). Phenomenology and the foundations of psychology. In J. K. Cole & W. J. Arnold (Eds.), *Nebraska symposium on motivation 1975.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Giorgi, A. (Ed.). (1985). *Phenomenology and psychological research.* Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time* (J. MacQuarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row. (Original work published 1927)
Husserl, E. (1962). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology* (W. R. B. Gibson, Trans.). New York: Collier Books. (Original work published 1913)
Husserl, E. (1970). *Logical investigations* (J. N. Findlay, Trans.). New York: Humanities Press. (Original work published 1900)
Husserl, E. (1989). *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy, Second Book: Studies in the phenomenology of constitution* (R. Rojcewicz & A. Schuwer, Trans.). Boston: Kluwer. (Original work written 1928 and published posthumously 1952)
Jaspers, K. (1963). *General psychopathology* (J. Hoenig & M. W. Hamilton, Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1913)
Keen, E. (1970). *Three faces of being: Toward an existential clinical psychology.* New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
Kvale, S. (1983). The qualitative research interview: A phenomenological and hermeneutical mode of understanding. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 14,* 171-196.
Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. (Original work published 1945)
Merleau-Ponty, M. (1963). *The structure of behavior* (A. Fisher, Trans.). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press. (Original work written 1938 and published 1942)
Minkowski, E. (1970). *Lived-time: Phenomenological and psychopathological studies.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Natanson, M. (1973). *Edmund Husserl: Philosopher of infinite tasks.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Pollio, H. R., Henley, T., & Thompson, C. B. (1998). *The phenomenology of everyday life.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
Sartre, J.-P. (1963). *Saint Genet: Actor and martyr.* New York: New American Library. (Original work published 1952)
Sartre, J.-P. (1970). Intentionality: A fundamental idea of Husserl's phenomenology (J. P. Fell, Trans.). *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, 1,* 4-5. (Original work published 1947)
Spiegelberg, H. (1972). *Phenomenology in psychology and psychiatry.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Spiegelberg, H. (1983). *The phenomenological movement: A historical introduction* (3rd ed.). Boston: Martinus Nijhoff.
Straus, E. (1966). *Phenomenological psychology: Selected papers* (E. Eng, Trans.). New York: Basic Books.
Valle, R. (Ed.). (1998). *Phenomenological inquiry: Existential and transpersonal dimensions.* New York: Plenum.
Valle, R. S., & Halling, S. (Eds.). (1989). *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology: Exploring the breadth and depth of human experience.* New York: Plenum.
van den Berg, J. H. (1972). *A different existence: Principles of phenomenological psychopathology.* Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
Van Kaam, A. (1959). Phenomenal analysis: Exemplified by a study of the experience of really feeling understood. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 15,* 66-72.
Van Kaam, A. (1966). *Existential foundations of psychology.* Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
Van Kaam, A. (1987). *Formative spirituality,* Vol. 4: *Scientific formation.* New York: Crossroad.

von Eckartsberg, R. (1971). On experiential methodology. In A. Giorgi, W. F. Fischer, & R. von Eckartsberg (Eds.), *Duquesne studies in phenomenological psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 66-79). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

von Eckartsberg, R. (1986). *Life-world experience: Existential-phenomenological research approaches in psychology.* Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology.

von Gebsattel, V. E. (1954). *Prolegomena zu einer medizinischen Anthropologie* (Prolegomena to a medical anthropology). Berlin: Springer.

von Gebsattel, V. E. (1958). The world of the compulsive (S. Koppel & E. Angel, Trans.). In R. May, E. Angel, & H. F. Ellenberger (Eds.), *Existence: A new dimension in psychiatry and psychology* (pp. 170-187). New York: Simon & Schuster.

Wertz, F. J. (1982). The findings and value of a descriptive approach to everyday perceptual process. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 13,* 169-195.

Wertz, F. J. (1983). From everyday to psychological description: Analyzing the moments of a qualitative data analysis. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 14,* 197-241.

Wertz, F. J. (1985). Methods and findings in an empirical analysis of "being criminally victimized." In A. Giorgi (Ed.), *Phenomenology and psychological research* (pp. 155-216). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Wertz, F. J. (1986). The question of reliability in psychological research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 17,* 181-205.

Wertz, F. J. (1987). Abnormality from scientific and prescientific perspectives. *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry, 19*(2-3), 205-223.

Wertz, F. J., & Aanstoos, C. M. (1999). Amedeo Giorgi and the project of human science. In D. Moss (Ed.), *Humanistic and transpersonal psychology* (pp. 287-300). Westport, CT: Greenwood.