

# Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Method An Example

Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Method An Example Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Method An Example and Comprehensive Guide Descriptive phenomenology a qualitative research approach within psychology aims to understand the lived experience of individuals concerning a particular phenomenon Unlike other approaches that focus on quantifiable data or causal relationships it prioritizes the richness and depth of subjective experience exploring the what of an experience before delving into the why or how This article provides a comprehensive overview of this method illustrating its application with a practical example and addressing frequently asked questions Theoretical Foundations Descriptive phenomenology draws heavily from the philosophical work of Edmund Husserl and later interpretations by researchers like Giorgi and Colaizzi Its core principle is bracketing or epoche where researchers temporarily suspend their preconceived notions and biases to approach the participants experiences with an open mind The goal is to grasp the essence of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants rather than imposing external frameworks This involves carefully analyzing participants descriptions to identify essential themes and structures of meaning inherent in their experience The process typically involves several steps 1 Identifying the Phenomenon Clearly defining the phenomenon of interest is crucial This requires precise language and a focus on a specific aspect of experience For example instead of anxiety the phenomenon could be narrowed to anxiety experienced during public speaking 2 Recruitment and Data Collection Participants are selected based on their relevant experience with the phenomenon Data is primarily gathered through indepth interviews allowing participants to describe their experiences in their own words Other methods like journaling or written reflections can also be employed 3 Data Reduction and Analysis This is where the core of descriptive phenomenology lies 2 Researchers meticulously read and reread the transcripts identifying significant statements and phrases These are then clustered into meaningful units revealing emerging themes and patterns This process is iterative and involves constant reflection to ensure fidelity to the participants experiences Imagine sifting sand to find gold nuggets each statement is a grain of sand and the themes are the valuable gold 4 Textural This stage focuses on describing the what of the experience outlining the core themes and their interrelationships in a comprehensive and detailed manner Its like creating a detailed map of the landscape of experience 5 Structural This goes a step further identifying the essential structure or essence of the experience It aims to uncover the underlying meaning and relationships between the themes representing the phenomena's structure in a holistic way This is akin to understanding the geological formations that created the landscape 6 Validation This involves member checking returning findings to participants to ensure accuracy and resonance with their lived experience This

feedback loop is critical for enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the study

**Example Experiencing Grief After Pet Loss** Lets illustrate the method with an example focused on the phenomenon of grief after pet loss

- 1 **Phenomenon** The focus is on the lived experience of grief specifically after the death of a beloved pet
- 2 **Data Collection** Interviews would be conducted with individuals who have experienced the death of a pet focusing on their emotional cognitive and behavioral responses Openended questions like Can you describe your experience of grief after your pet died and What were the most significant aspects of that experience for you would be used
- 3 **Data Analysis** The researchers would analyze the transcripts identifying recurring themes such as overwhelming sadness feelings of loneliness anger at the loss memories of shared moments and rituals of remembrance
- 4 **Textural** A detailed account would be provided describing the emotional rollercoaster cognitive disorientation and behavioral changes associated with pet loss This would include direct quotes from participants illustrating their experiences
- 5 **Structural** The analysis might reveal an underlying structure of grief characterized by stages though not necessarily linear involving initial shock a period of intense emotional 3 pain gradual acceptance and eventual adaptation This structural description would highlight the interrelationship of the identified themes
- 6 **Validation** The researchers would share the findings with participants to ensure the accurate representation of their experiences

**ForwardLooking Conclusion** Descriptive phenomenology remains a powerful tool for exploring the complexities of human experience Its strength lies in its ability to illuminate the nuances and depth of lived realities providing rich nuanced data that can inform both theoretical understanding and practical applications in psychology healthcare and beyond As technology advances incorporating digital tools for data collection and analysis could further enhance the efficiency and reach of phenomenological research However its crucial to maintain rigorous adherence to methodological principles to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the findings The focus should always remain on preserving the authenticity and richness of the participants lived experiences

**ExpertLevel FAQs**

- 1 **How does descriptive phenomenology differ from interpretive phenomenology** Descriptive phenomenology prioritizes a detailed description of the lived experience focusing on the what before exploring the why Interpretive phenomenology on the other hand delves deeper into the meaningmaking processes of individuals exploring the subjective interpretations and understanding of the experience
- 2 **What are the limitations of descriptive phenomenology** The subjective nature of the data can make generalization to larger populations challenging The researchers own biases although bracketed can still subtly influence the analysis Furthermore the intensive nature of data analysis can be timeconsuming and resourceintensive
- 3 **How can researcher bias be minimized in descriptive phenomenological research** Rigorous training in phenomenological methodology employing multiple researchers for data analysis to enhance interrater reliability and engaging in ongoing reflection on potential biases are crucial steps Using techniques like reflexivity journaling can help researchers become aware of and address their own assumptions
- 4 **How can the credibility and trustworthiness of a descriptive phenomenological study be established** Rigorous adherence to the methodological steps detailed description of the research process member checking with participants and clear presentation of findings with supporting

evidence quotes from participants are essential 4 5 What are the ethical considerations in conducting descriptive phenomenological research Ensuring informed consent maintaining participant anonymity and confidentiality minimizing potential harm to participants and ensuring that the research serves a meaningful purpose are paramount ethical considerations The researchers responsibility extends to accurately representing the participants experiences and voices

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one could describe the status of psychological research today as one in which qualitative methods based upon diverse philosophies have been developing and advancing at a fast pace it is a time therefore when reflections on this state of affairs are appropriate the five essays in this book are all concerned with qualitative methods and their philosophical backgrounds briefly the first essay contrasts the relative merits of the three most used philosophical bases for qualitative methods empirical philosophy hermeneutics and husserlian descriptive

phenomenology the second essay tries to resolve the tensions between descriptive and interpretive methods both are of service to science but they relate to different conditions the third essay discusses certain pitfalls that should be avoided when conducting psychological research on oneself the fourth essay describes the extension of certain guidelines when using the descriptive phenomenological method the fifth essay challenges the assumption of naturalism for psychology and argues for the development of a non naturalistic method for psychology

this comprehensive work from one of the leading thinkers in humanistic psychology provides a thorough discussion of the phenomenological foundations for qualitative research in psychology amedeo giorgi's examination operates out of the intersection of phenomenological philosophy science and psychology such a multidisciplinary approach allows him to challenge several long standing assumptions about the practice of psychology giorgi asserts that empiricism is not the best philosophy for grounding the science of psychology rather the broader phenomenological theory of science permits more adequate psychological development giorgi draws from husserl's philosophical principles the reasons for conducting research in psychology and then offers practical steps for applying a phenomenological method and real examples of applications of the method in fact giorgi proposes a method that is theoretically grounded in phenomenological philosophy and yet treats empirically derived data this is a rigorous but open qualitative research method that is tolerant of pararational givens as well as one that is supportive of rational criteria the analyses and methods presented in phenomenological method in psychology will be attractive to psychologists phenomenologists and researchers involved in qualitative research throughout social and human science disciplines

this is a student friendly and comprehensive introduction to phenomenological theory and methods the study of phenomena rather than the science of being

this paper is the methodology section of my doctoral dissertation that outlines the descriptive phenomenological psychological method of research as it has been taught to me by amedeo p giorgi giorgi 2009 based his method on husserl's descriptive phenomenological philosophy as an alternative epistemology for human science research this method section references giorgi's work and the phenomenological tradition of husserl merleau ponty and others each step of giorgi's 2009 modified husserlian method is described and explained in the context of doing psychological research on the lived experience of the participants in my dissertation research the steps are 1 assume the phenomenological attitude 2 read entire written account for a sense of the whole 3 delineate meaning units 4 transform the meaning units into psychologically sensitive statements of their lived meanings and 5 synthesize a general psychological structure of the experience base on the constituents of the experience it is the first person psychological perspective that is sought so that an empathetic position can be adopted by the end user of the research

psychology as a human science a phenomenologically based approach is a classic text in the

field of psychology that is as relevant today as it was when it was first published in 1970 giorgi's text helped establish the philosophical foundation humanistic psychology and the human science approach he provides an important critique of traditional methods in psychology while providing his alternative this new version includes a new introduction by giorgi along with a new foreword by rodger broomé

this book is both a theoretical justification of a phenomenological and human scientific approach to psychological research and a presentation of findings in the areas of cognitive clinical and social psychology the book is important because it is the most sustained statement to date about a phenomenological approach to psychological research along with original findings to compare with mainstream psychology in crucial areas of psychology cognitive clinical and social psychology phenomenology and psychological research is further clarification of the phenomenological approach to psychological research along with examples of application in four different content areas learning and thinking both examples of alternative approaches to cognitive processes self deception clinical psychology and criminal victimization social psychology as such it gives the reader who is merely curious about the possibilities of phenomenological approaches a good opportunity to evaluate its fruitfulness whereas those who are already sympathetic to the approach will find a greater articulation of the theory behind the procedures lastly the reader will find in this study an example of a descriptive and qualitative approach to psychological research that claims to meet both phenomenological and human scientific criteria it is one of the first books to make such a claim about psychological research

from the preface to the revised edition since its publication in 2007 transcendental phenomenological psychology has been sold on every continent except antarctica and is in the collections of research libraries in north america europe and asia even so its presentation to the academic community rightly provoked many comments corrections suggestions and criticisms such input while mostly welcome provided the impetus to publish a revised edition a phenomenological explanation of human consciousness has long been sought in regions of psychology since the discipline was first carved out of philosophical concepts and theories about the human condition in its earliest years western psychology was faced with two possible directions for this explanation an empirical naturalistic approach along with physics and biology or a non empirical eidetic approach along with logic and mathematics edmund husserl took up the latter his phenomenological tradition of inquiry successfully spanned nearly forty years until suddenly stopped and largely suppressed during the second world war this book recovers husserl's revolutionary approach toward the human sciences just as it was developed and just as it is presented for further study here the author systematically gathers what husserl calls the leading clues in the phenomenological method proper for a psychology of affective inner experience and then for the first time applies husserl's own methodology for introducing a phenomenological psychology in the transcendental register of human consciousness unlike contemporary phenomenological psychology in the existential register transcendental phenomenological psychology is presented as an eidetic non empirical act

psychology in husserl's mature genetic phenomenology this novel approach takes in the full range of solipsistic and transcendental subjectivity in husserl's theories of human consciousness and follows husserl's lead in presenting phenomenological psychology as an applied geometry of intentional experience within a step wise theory of inquiry this book is unique in human science today not only in its presentation of the development and applications of husserl's key concepts for the discipline of psychology but also for introducing a psychology that could be intuitively grasped as self evidently valid wherever one's interest might lie

praise for first edition this book is highly recommended to a wide range of people as a clear and systematic introduction to phenomenological psychology the book has set the stage for possible new colloquia between the phenomenological and other approaches in psychology changes as a trainee interested in matters existential i have been put off in the past by the long winded and confusing texts usually available in academic libraries thankfully here is a text that remedies that situation it provides a readable and insightful account clinical psychology forum spinelli's classic introduction to phenomenology should be essential reading on all person centred existential and humanistic trainings and any other counselling or psychotherapy course which aims to help students develop an in depth understanding of human lived experience this book is sure to remain a key text for many years to come mick cooper senior lecturer in counselling university of strathclyde this is by far the most monumental erudite comprehensive authoritative case that existentialism and phenomenology have a rightful place in the academy b are tough minded bodies of thought c have rigorous scientific foundations d bequeath a distinctive school of psychotherapy and counselling and e are just as good as the more established systems of psychology alvin r mahrer ph d university of ottawa canada author of the complete guide to experiential psychotherapy this book's rich insight into the lacunae of modern psychological thinking illustrates the contribution that existential phenomenology can make to founding a coherently mature psychology that is both fully human e and responsibly scientific in the best sense of that term richard house ph d magdalen medical practice norwich steiner waldorf teacher the interpreted world second edition is a welcome introduction to phenomenological psychology an area of psychology which has its roots in notoriously difficult philosophical literature writing in a highly accessible jargon free style ernesto spinelli traces the philosophical origins of phenomenological theory and presents phenomenological perspectives on central topics in psychology perception social cognition and the self he compares the phenomenological approach with other major contemporary psychological approaches pointing up areas of divergence and convergence with these systems he also examines implications of phenomenology for the precepts and process of psychotherapy for the second edition a new chapter on phenomenological research has been added in which the author focuses on the contribution of phenomenology in relation to contemporary scientific enquiry he describes the methodology used in phenomenological research and illustrates the approach through an actual research study the interpreted world second edition demystifies an exciting branch of psychology making its insights available to all students of psychology psychotherapy and

counselling

there are no books precisely parallel to this one the main works of the major authors in phenomenological philosophy but not phenomenological psychology are in print we mean husserl heidegger sartre and merleau ponty general texts on the phenomenological approach in philosophy including ones which take a historical approach are available notable are h spiegelberg 1981 the phenomenological movement 3rd edition the hague martinus nijhoff d moran 2000 introduction to phenomenology london routledge there are several accounts of psychology from a phenomenological viewpoint in print some of which refer to the philosophical roots the extent of the reference varies none fully spells the connections out and none has a historical perspective for example r s valle and s halling 1989 existential phenomenological perspectives in psychology new york plenum press e spinelli 2005 the interpreted world an introduction to phenomenological psychology 2nd edition london sage h r pollio t b henley and c t thompson 1997 the phenomenology of everyday life cambridge cambridge university press k dahlberg n drew and m nyström 2001 reflective lifeworld research stockholm studentlitteratur there are books in print which are much more concerned with the practicalities of phenomenologically based research in psychology than with the history and philosophy underlying this the most used example is probably c moustakas 1994 phenomenological research methods thousand oaks sage i would characterize the current book in contrast to the above as having phenomenologically based research in psychology firmly in view but addressing in detail the historical development of the phenomenological movement in philosophy insofar as it illuminates the impact on psychology so the historical development of phenomenological philosophy and the impact at each stage on psychology answering as a collateral effect the question what is phenomenological psychology it is essential to offer an authoritative account of these matters now because qualitative research in psychology has achieved acceptance in europe though the acceptance is less in the united states at present and with qualitative research in general phenomenologically based research is widely practiced the british psychological society by whom undergraduate degrees in psychology are accredited and without this accreditation students cannot progress to professional training has just begun to demand qualitative research training as part of the research methods and practical training programme this book uniquely contains material that would be needed for a thorough background in phenomenological psychology the british psychological society has also just begun to demand a core module in the history and philosophy of psychology as part of the advanced undergraduate education of psychology students this book though not intended as a core elementary text would be right as background reading in associated applied areas throughout the world e g health psychology organizational and industrial psychology counseling nursing phenomenological approaches are well accepted and very widely used however the meaning of the approach is often misunderstood often boiling down to a report of e g patients statements about such and such a thing experience is not rigorously addressed this book provides a necessary corrective and indicates what the options are for phenomenologically based research and the basis of these options within the history of phenomenological philosophy

this fine new book the third in a series brings psychologists up to date on the advances of phenomenological research methods in illuminating the nature of human awareness and experiences in the more congenial and welcoming intellectual climate of the 1990s phenomenological methods have moved to the forefront of discourse on research methods that support and advocate an expanding view of science in valle and king 1978 phenomenological methods were presented as alternatives to behavioral methods in valle and halling 1989 phenomenological methods were advanced to perspectives in psychology this new volume is even less cautious indeed bolder in relation to conventional methods and epistemologies by now people knowledgeable about psychology and most psychologists have digested the criticisms directed against methods that operationalize quantify and often minimize human behavior in bringing us up to date on the growing power of the phenomenological methods this volume brings welcome coherence and integrity to an increasingly harried science attempting to reenchant itself with meaning and depth an endeavor artfully exemplified by phenomenological inquiries of the last several decades

this book describes doing psychology phenomenologically

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