Reflective Commentary

Professor Scott D. Churchill

a. How does the course fit into your department’s/undergraduate program’s curriculum?

The Qual Research course is required of all majors in the spring of the junior year. It is the beginning of the three-course sequence that leads to thesis, and is placed after their introduction to General Psychology, Statistics, and Quantitative Research Design. It is followed by the Phenomenology seminar in the fall and Senior Thesis in the spring.

I've attached this year's syllabus as well as the one I did two years ago at both graduate and undergraduate levels.

b. How was the focus of the course, e.g., on a specific methodology; a general overview of qualitative inquiry, determined?

Our department was phenomenological when it was founded in 1972 by Robt Sardello and Robt Romanyshyn. We've maintained that approach for the past 43 years. We teach phenomenological and hermeneutic methodologies.

c. Are there particular challenges to teaching qualitative inquiry as an undergraduate psychology offering that you try to address in your course? How do you do so?

This course was developed as an undergraduate class from the start - my first such class was in the late 1980s. It was optional. Soon it was required of all majors.

d. What is the rationale for the assignments, exams, etc.?

The rationale is to pedagogically take the students into both phenomenology and qual research at the same time. In the spring we do qual research and introduce phenomenology (Heidegger, 1923 and Sartre, 1939)
Teaching Phenomenology by Way of “Second-Person Perspectivity”  
(From My Thirty Years at the University of Dallas) 

by Scott D. Churchill 

Abstract 

Phenomenology has remained a sheltering place for those who would seek to understand not only their own “first person” experiences but also the first person experiences of others. Recent publications by renowned scholars within the field have clarified and extended our possibilities of access to “first person” experience by means of perception (Lingis, 2007) and reflection (Zahavi, 2005). Teaching phenomenology remains a challenge, however, because one must find ways of communicating to the student how to embody it as a process rather than simply to learn about it as a content area. Another challenge issues from the fact that most writings on applied phenomenology emphasize individual subjectivity as the central focus, while offering only indirect access to the subjectivity of others (for example, by way of analyzing written descriptions provided by the individual under study). While one finds in the literature of psychotherapy plentiful elucidations of the “we-experience” within which therapists form impressions of their clients’ experience, there is still need for a more thoughtful clarification of our rather special personal modes of access to the experience of others in everyday life. This paper will present “second person perspectivity” as a mode of resonating with the expressions of others and will describe class activities that can bring students closer to a lived understanding of what it means to be doing phenomenology in the face of the other. 

Among the challenges for phenomenology is the crucial question: how do we break from the “first person singular experience” in order to encounter other sentient beings in the world? I call this a challenge, because phenomenology is generally “done” in the first person singular, even if it always presupposes the first person plural, which is to say that we “find ourselves” living in a world with others. If today’s phenomenologists are not yet at home dwelling reflectively in second person perspectivity, it is nonetheless the case that there is a necessary shift from first person singular to second person awareness the moment we embark on the task of an ethics. Even before we engage in our ontological and ethical reflections, there is an ethos of the social world itself, which serves as backdrop for all our actions. Within this ethos, we encounter what Levinas (1961/1969) called “the face of the other”. Even prior to Levinas, Husserl (1910-11/2006) pointed us in the direction of what has been called an “intersubjective reduction”. It is precisely the possibility (and the positing) of this intersubjective dimension of the “transcendental reduction” that inspires us here in the move toward second person perspectivity. 

Psychology seems to have begun as a discipline whose target was first person experience, but it quickly degenerated into what are, strictly speaking,
third person approaches\(^1\) to the individual. Eventually, Merleau-Ponty (1945/1964c, p. 52) would (ambiguously) offer the perspective of a “witness” of behaviour as a fruitful alternative to introspection as a mode of access to the meaning of lived experience. I say that he was “ambiguous” because he did not clarify for us the distinction I would like to make here between “second person” and “third person” modes of bearing witness. What I wish to do in this paper is to elaborate the meaning of taking up one’s role as a “witness” of behaviour in the mode of second person perspectivity. The paper will proceed from a brief definition of this mode of witnessing, to a sketch of my history in teaching phenomenology, and then to a presentation of some exercises that I use to teach this very special mode of observing both human and non-human expression. Following this, I will revisit the philosophical literature and discuss further implications for pedagogy.

**Second Person Perspectivity**

One might say that the “second person perspective” itself emerges when we first engage the other person as a “you” – which usually occurs at the moment that we first address the other, whether as a speaking or a non-speaking subject. At this point, I have not differentiated the other as a human being from the more general world of sentient beings. Indeed, my own reflective forays into the world of second-person experiences began when I first began thinking about my encounters with primates – and, more specifically, with my first “conversations with a bonobo” (Churchill 2000-2001, 2001, 2003). Since then, I have had to sharpen my thoughts regarding the “second person”\(^2\) if only because of the ambiguity of who is the “first” and who is the “second” person at any moment within the “I-thou” encounter (Churchill, 2006a, 2007, 2010b; Churchill, 2010).

In an earlier contribution to this journal (Churchill, 2006a), I focused upon the “up-close” exchange between myself and a bonobo as a point of departure for considering the power of second-person perspectivity for entering into the world of other sentient beings. In the current paper, I would like to elaborate this concept of the second person while also offering a reflection on the pedagogical exercises that I have used in my classes as a way of attuning my students to this dimension of their own experience. In my earlier treatment, I started out with the usual linguistic distinctions: with “first person” referring to my stance as thinking subject, “second person” referring to your position as the one I am addressing, and “third person” referring to the person “over there” whose behaviour I may be observing at a distance. I then reversed the usual (linguistic) use of “persons” in order to reflect the psychologist’s interest, which is not his or her own experience but rather that of the patient, the client, the research participant. In this formulation, my interest or target would be the first person experience of the other. If I were to adopt a “third person” perspective, such as the behaviourist does, then the other’s “first person” experience would remain opaque to me. If I were to attempt to “adopt” the other’s first person perspective via Schutz’s (1970, pp. 183-184) notion of an “interchangeability of standpoints”, I would end up trying to imagine the other’s experience, but would remain ultimately within my own framework. These unsatisfactory alternatives of dispassionate third person and imaginative first person perspectives can, however, be transcended when I allow myself to resonate with the other: where I become the “second person” whom the other addresses.

What I am acknowledging in the current formulation is that “second person perspectivity” is a special mode of access to the other that occurs within the first person plural: in experiencing the other within the we\(^3\), we are open to the other as a “thou”, another “myself” – and, in this same moment, I become an intimate “Other” to the one with whom I find myself in an “exchange”. Thus, the trick to understanding second person perspectivity is realizing that it works in both directions at the same time. “What matters is our willingness and ability to acknowledge and be open to the presence of the other as a locus of experience that can reciprocate that acknowledgement” (Quincey, 2000, p. 152). Merleau-Ponty (1960/1964b) wrote in “The Philosopher and His Shadow”: “Others and my body are born together from the original ecstasy” (p. 174). This ecstasy refers to that special moment within “first person plural” experience when we experience the call to ourselves to enjoins the other in that communicative dance, that exhilarating exchange, in which we come to know both ourselves and others.

\(^1\) It is also an unfortunate fact that “phenomenological” qualitative research is increasingly being conducted from a third person perspective, in which the researcher merely summarizes the statements made by research participants, accepting at face value the first-person formulations of participants presented from within their “natural attitude”, and thus remaining within the participant’s natural attitude rather than transcending it by means of a “psychological phenomenological reduction” (Giorgi, 2009; Husserl, 1925/1977).

\(^2\) Evan Thompson’s (2001) illuminating collection of essays from a rich array of sources provided me with the inspiration to continue my reflections in the direction of clarifying my own “second person” experiences both in the classroom and in my subsequent writings.

\(^3\) I would like to express thanks to Lester Embree for suggesting this phrase to me in reference to my work.
I have been working on developing the idea behind this second person perspective in a series of reflections focusing in on one or another application (conversations with a bonobo, observing emotional expressions, qualitative research interviewing, open-hearted caregiving) – and now I have been asked to talk about teaching phenomenology. So I will turn here to a discussion of some of the exercises that I use in cultivating an empathic presence to the world with my students. One of the things that I really enjoy in “teaching” second-person perspectivity is that it is really a matter of making students more aware of a capacity for experiencing and understanding others’ expressions of life that they have always already “possessed” (much like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, who is shown by the Wizard that she has always possessed the means of returning home by simply clicking her red shoes). In carrying out these exercises, the students become enthralled to discover that they can tap into their own experience to open themselves to new worlds.

New Worlds

My first introduction to the phenomenon of other “worlds” was through my reading of von Uexküll (1909) as a freshman biology major at Bucknell. It was von Uexküll’s (1934) exploration of the “bubbles of perception” found within the animal world that later led Heidegger (1929-30/1995), Binswanger (1946/1958), and Merleau-Ponty (1956-57/2003) to acknowledge him as a pioneer in laying the groundwork for clarifying how it is that we have access to other worlds, other beings. I began creating pedagogical exercises for my freshmen students when I was a graduate assistant at Duquesne in the mid-1970s, where I would have them attempt, via von Uexküll’s method of “participatory observation” (see T. von Uexküll, 1992, pp. 280-281), to imagine their way into the lifeworlds (or Umwelten) of animal species other than their own. I will be referring back to this in a moment, when I discuss the phenomenological exercises that I currently use with my students.

My work over the years has focused, in one way or another, on a study of “alterity”. I have been interested, as a phenomenologist, in the personal means of access to that which is not originally my own experience, but which belongs to the Other – and which nonetheless comes within the purview of my own experience. I took my cue from Merleau-Ponty (1952/1973) who, in The Prose of the World, wrote: “Whether speaking or listening, I project myself into the other person, I introduce him into my own self” (p. 19). In my dissertation, I took up the phenomenon of how, as a clinical psychologist, one could phenomenologically have access to the meaning of a patient’s experience – and thus how one could approach the study of the other “person” or “personality” (Churchill, 1984, 1998). Later, I delved into the experience of gendered alterity, undertaking an analysis of the experiences of “projective identification” with another person as revealed during moments of intimate play (Churchill, 1995, 1997). In that project, I was investigating empathic moments of connecting with another person, where “empathy” referred to a moment when one is so absorbed in the perception – the living/perceiving – of another’s pleasure that one feels as though one were there “on the other side” of the encounter. Eventually I would incorporate what I had learned in these special contexts to understanding empathy as an investigatory posture within qualitative research (Churchill, 1988; 1993; 2006b; Churchill, Lowery, McNally, & Rao, 1998).

Psychology Goes to the Cinema

It was in search of new ways of bringing my students to cultivate their sense of empathy in accessing others’ experiences that I began teaching courses in the psychology of film. Currently, for example, I am running a film series in conjunction with my Fundamentals of Clinical Psychology class, which we are calling “Cinematic Representations of the Asylum”. Having students watch The Snake Pit, One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, I Never Promised you a Rose Garden, Frances, Sling Blade, King of Hearts, and Girl, Interrupted has brought them face to face with personal worlds of fictional as well as nonfictional characters. In viewing these films, students bear witness, time and time again, to an existence that is not their own. Over the past couple of decades, I have added a series of one-credit film classes to my regular teaching schedule – Contemporary French Cinema, Women in Film, Cutting Edge Films of the Late 1960s and 1970s, Woody Allen Films, Fellini Films, Cinematic Explorations of Inner Worlds and Character, Film Fantasy and Dreams. Each of these classes became a way of exploring the worlds of fictional characters and, ultimately, the worlds of the directors themselves. But, most of all, it was the phenomenology of the film experience that I was trying to convey. In these film classes, I try to get the students to reflect on “where they are” psychologically when they are viewing the film in a theatre – totally immersed in its world, almost as though you are there “on the other side” of the screen. (Such an experience is all but lost when viewing a film on one’s cell phone, or even in one’s living room. Thus, it is so disheartening to see a new

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4 I wish to thank Karin Dahlberg, Kate Galvin and Les Todres for their elucidations of “openheartedness” (Dahlberg & Drew, 1997; Galvin & Todres, 2009) which inspired me to adopt this term in my own reflections.

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In turning to watching films together as a way of accessing other worlds, I realized that I had struck gold! Movies, like other moments of intimate perception, give one a glimpse of what it is like to be “on the other side”. To get my students more “into” their bodies, however, we would have to take field trips to local zoos and museums.

**Trips to the Zoo**

Around the mid 1990s, I began teaching university classes at the Dallas Zoo with an aim toward the description of the behaviours of gorillas and chimpanzees. Actually, I started teaching Jane Goodall’s (1971/1988) work in my first Foundations of Psychology classes in the mid-1980s, but it was not until the late 1990s that I began to realize that I could begin to engender a different kind of learning experience than ever before. We had conducted a baseline study of the chimpanzees’ social behaviour before they were moved into a new “Chimpanzoo” exhibit that was, like the existing gorilla exhibit, a natural habitat. During this time, we were made to begin to engage in a kind of dance with the bonobo, which eventually attracted a swarm of visitors who formed an audience behind my students, who were watching and taking copious notes (no doubt delighted that their professor was “making a monkey of himself”). I say “found myself” because I truly did not think of myself as “directing” my own behaviour, but rather reacting quite “automatically” or “naturally” to the gestures of the bonobo.

Given my own success in encountering the bonobos at the zoo, I thought to integrate this into my phenomenology classes, as a way of getting students “out of their heads” and “into their bodies” in developing a personal aptitude for understanding the expressive life of others. So I would take my students to one of the local zoos, and ask them each to reflect on the “world” of a particular animal (what von Uexküll had called the Umwelt) and compare this to their own personal Umwelt. Taking our cue from Wolfgang Köhler (1921/1971), we realized that we had to find a way of cultivating our abilities to form what he called gestalts or “total impressions”. In his essay on “Methods of Psychological Research with Apes”, Wolfgang Köhler wrote:

> The encounter became a series of gestural exchanges in which he appeared to be engaging in motor movements in order to provoke a response from me. The only thing I could think to do was to respond in kind, to mimic his gestures, and soon I found myself engaged in a kind of dance with the bonobo, which eventually attracted a swarm of visitors who formed an audience behind my students, who were watching and taking copious notes (no doubt delighted that their professor was “making a monkey of himself”). I say “found myself” because I truly did not think of myself as “directing” my own behaviour, but rather reacting quite “automatically” or “naturally” to the gestures of the bonobo.

> The farther we push the analysis in striving for [a particular] kind of objectivity, the less we are inclined to call the description one of the “behaviour” of apes, and the more it dissolves into purely physiological statements. But this is scarcely the intention of objective psychology [the aim of which would be fidelity to the “object” of description]! … . If the subject matter of objective psychological observations disappears as soon as one tries to describe it analytically beyond a certain point, then there are realities in the animals investigated which are perceptible to us only in those total impressions. (p. 206)

And then Köhler asks: “How is that possible?” Indeed, how is it possible that the traditional scientific third person point of view results in our losing sight of the subject matter of objective psychology? What is it that the third person perspective fails to give us, time and time again, when we go to the encounter with our animal subjects?

Köhler continues:

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5 One of my students eventually wrote her senior thesis on this topic that had emerged from our Spring/Summer 1997 Ape Ethography classes; the thesis was later published in *Methods: A Journal for Human Science* (Maril, 2002).

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already in 1921 a psychologist was pointing us in the direction of seeing a relationship of unity between the givenness of behaviour in our perceptual field, and our experience of that behaviour in its meaningfulness.

We found inspiration not only in Köhler, but in the writings of Karl Jaspers (1913/1963) who, in his massive General Psychopathology, presents the reader with two fundamental modes of access to the objective expressions of psychological life: the empirical and the empathic. The former would correspond to what animal psychologists are typically doing when observing animal behaviour as seen through the filter of an “ethogram” (a codified list of observable behaviours, operationally defined); the latter would correspond to what we eventually incorporated into our observations, which can only be described as descriptions of the behaviour’s meaning as revealed to us in our own experience. Merleau-Ponty observed:

Within my own situation that of the [other] whom I am questioning makes its appearance and, in this bipolar phenomenon, I learn to know both myself and others. (1945/1962, p. 338; emphasis added)

In the unfolding of this article, I have been trying to illustrate my theme of second person perspectivity by adumbrating it through different examples: an intimate encounter, watching a movie, and now we have added the experience of the world of another species into the mix. We shall now turn to the final example of lifeworld contexts for learning phenomenology, namely, the experience of works of art.

Resonating with Art

At the same time that I was taking psychology students to the zoo, I found myself challenged in the classes I was teaching on phenomenology to find ways of bringing Merleau-Ponty’s (1961/1964a) essay “Eye and Mind” to life. I thought of taking my students to a museum to gaze upon impressionist paintings (and eventually to experience sculpture, video installations, and architectural spaces). Entering a sculpture garden one day proved to be for my students the best introduction imaginable to Merleau-Ponty’s (1945/1962) chapters in his Phenomenology of Perception on “the motility of the body” and “sense perception”, not to mention “the body in its sexual being”. In our field trips to museums, we encounter paintings, sculptures, and architectural spaces, and the students are asked each to spend time in silent contemplation of one artwork (or art space) that “strikes a chord” in his or her own experience, or simply “resonates” with him or her. This appears to have been the “magic word”, for it seemed that, after my first use of this term in the foyer of a museum, an entire class of students (including both graduate and undergraduate students from different majors) were all able to produce vivid descriptions, some of them exclaiming that never before had anyone suggested to them that they might have something to say about a painting hanging on a wall in a museum. Indeed, for some students, the word “resonate” stuck with them and seemed to facilitate by suggestion that they would in fact “have” such an experience.

To help set the stage, I tell them that I find that my experience with art is transformed when I think of an artwork as a “gesture” to me from the artist. I also tell them that, when you find yourself peculiarly drawn to an artwork as a “gesture” to me from the artist. I also tell them that, when you find yourself peculiarly drawn to something, it is because it strikes some kind of chord in you. It is one thing to have mental associations to a painting, and it is quite another thing to experience the upsurge of an unfamiliar feeling, but one that is welcome nonetheless. I tell them,

Just let the artwork select you, rather than the other way around. Trust the fact that you were compelled to do a double-take when you first walked past it, and try to notice the kind of dance you do with it, finding just the right vantage point from which to observe it. When you find that point, try to notice how you feel, how you are affected in that very place.

After a period of silent contemplation, I instruct them to sit down on one of those nice padded benches that one finds in Art Museums and write a few spontaneous impressions. Two weeks later, after an adequate period of incubation, they submit an essay that communicates their experience.

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6 These correspond to Dilthey’s earlier distinction between “explanation” and “understanding” as referred to in his famous statement: “Die Natur erklären wir; das Seelenleben verstehen wir” [We explain nature, but we understand the life of the soul] (1894/1977, p. 27). For excellent discussions of the phenomenology of understanding as a mode of access to the meaningful worlds of others, see Jaspers, 1913/1963, pp. 301-313; also see pp. 55, 254-256, 274-275, 280-282, 293-297.
Further Reflections on Second Person Perspectivity

Together with watching films and mirroring the behaviour of apes at the zoo, we were now beginning to resonate with the expression we found in works of art. The idea in all of these exercises was for the students to experience both sides of the dialectic of perception and expression. Together, these situations constituted for us “ways of experiencing” that were grounded in the lifeworld and thus provided an “existential phenomenological” starting point for our reflections: fascinating glimpses into cinematic worlds, intimate encounters with other species, and embodied relationships with works of art. In each of these experiences, we are bearing witness to the worlds of others. The medium for this “witnessing” is our lived body (which we already understand as “a node in the web” of intercorporeal Being).

Thus, just as one can be “there on the other side” of the intimate encounter, or there “on the other side” of the movie screen, or there “on the other side” of the looking glass at the zoo, we also found that we could be there “on the other side” of the painting hanging on the wall of the museum. Admittedly, there are differing “degrees of separation” between ourselves and a research interviewee sitting across from us in the same room, a captive bonobo appearing through a looking glass at the zoo, a work of art mounted on a museum wall, and a character in a film projected onto a screen in a theatre. Being addressed by a speaking subject is different from the experience of “being addressed” (or simply looked at?) by an animal at the zoo. When we gaze upon a painting or sculpture in a museum, there is a sense in which we are being addressed by the artist; this is what led Merleau-Ponty (1952/1973, pp. 44–46) to call the work of art a gesture (and thus accessible to second person perspectivity). Finally, in the world of the cinema experience, we are being addressed (indirectly) by the director (although not truly by the character). Still, however, it is arguable that one can enter into an empathic experience with a character in a film (see Plantinga, 1999).

When we invoke Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the reversibilities of the flesh, we are able to appreciate the “both/and” nature of our reciprocal roles as first and second persons within the “we experience”, rather than slipping ambivalently into the “either/or” dichotomy that one finds in Sartre (1943/1956). We all know Sartre’s heart-stopping example of the experience of being “caught in the act” when he describes the voyeur who, looking through the peephole, suddenly freezes when hearing footsteps coming down the hall. Or his description of the “fixed sliding of the universe” that occurs when the other drifts into the clearing in the park where I am sitting on the park bench as the centre of my own universe, as the “for-itself” for whom the world exists, and as the one who must relinquish this sovereignty at the very moment I become an object in the other’s field. The question is, can we ever escape from this dialectical oscillation between the status of subject and object, master and slave, self and other – and can we thereby find a way of bridging the gap between the observer and the observed?

It was to address this dilemma that I directed an undergraduate thesis that was originally titled The Experience of Being Perceived as Beautiful: A Phenomenological Study Informed by Sartre’s Ontology7 (Rao, 1992), which was published later in Qualitative Research in Psychology (Rao & Churchill, 2004). (In many respects, this was a more sublimated version of my own research into intimate encounters, which I was conducting concomitantly with Rao’s study.) Although I allowed a degree of simplification in that paper with respect to our very brief and cursory characterizations of Sartre’s three ontological modes of the body (which we called the body-for-itself, the body-in-itself-for-others, and the body-for-itself-for-others), I do believe that the data of this qualitative study not only lent itself well to phenomenological analysis, but required that there be a third alternative to the traditional dichotomy of the body as “subject-for-me” and as “object-for-the-other”. That is, while bracketing the Sartrean formulations at the outset of the analysis, the data of this empirical-phenomenological study clearly presented an experience of each research participant coming alive as a subject (and not as an object) under the other’s gaze.8 The profound implication of this qualitative research finding is that it illustrates an ontological principle heretofore unexplored: namely, the bodily experience of feeling the awakening of (and sustaining of) one’s subjectivity under the other’s gaze (something only alluded to with Husserl’s Ineinander).8 Studying experiences of being

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7 The contemporary philosopher Tzvetan Todorov (2001, p. 54) observed: “Man lives perhaps first of all in his skin, but he does not begin to exist except through the gaze of others” (quoted in Reel, 2010, p. 163).

8 Hazel Barnes would later write this to Rao: “Yesterday I was given a copy of … your article … I am delighted with it! Your endeavour to study the interaction of people’s looks and judgments is an extremely interesting and original research project. You have accomplished well the objective analysis of subjective, intertwined reactions. I am especially pleased to see you bring in the notion of ‘exchange’ in the dimension of the look. I have emphasized this in my own work, but almost nobody ever considers it. When I spoke one time with Simone de Beauvoir about my reading of the three dimensions of the look in Sartre’s theory, she confirmed this as something really there.” Barnes wrote that note on the evening of the last day of a symposium on Phenomenology and
perceived as beautiful revealed something more than the research participants’ experiences of being objectified by “third person” stares; it revealed, to the contrary, the experience of being “subjectified” by second person adoration.

9 Mutual adoration within the first person plural experience is what brings to life the reversibility of first and second person perspectivity in moments of ecstatic perception, as beautifully described here by Merleau-Ponty: “Vision ceases to be solipsist only up close, when the other turns back on me the luminous rays in which I had caught him, renders precise that corporeal adhesion of which I had a presentiment in the agile movements of his eyes, enlarges beyond measure that blind spot I divined at the centre of my sovereign vision, and, invading my field through all its frontiers, attracts me into the prison I had prepared for him and, as long as he is there, makes me incapable of solitude” (1964/1968, p. 78).

Teaching the “What” and the “How” of Phenomenology

My approach to teaching is to try to communicate difficult concepts by way of illustration; and, preferably, through the utilization of several examples of the same theme. So, for example, when I wish to teach my students the distinction between the “what” and the “how” of perception – between what Husserl called “noema” and “noesis” – I will often give the example of the Rorschach cards used by psychologists to “get to” the person’s way of perceiving the world through his or her descriptions of it: the what leads us back to the how. The “content” of the percept leads us back to the perceptual style of the patient; this is the very meaning of “percept analysis” (as opposed to simply a “content analysis” where one “analyzes” the verbalization itself).

Similar to this first example is a second that I draw from the field of ethnobotany. (The further away from the first example that I can go, the better I believe that I can bring the student to the general insight towards which I am aiming.) Cultural anthropologists, when confronted with the challenge of studying indigenous populations in places like Hawaii, were trying to think of a way of discovering the “ethos” of the people in such a way as to be comparing different tribes or ethnic groups on a kind of “level playing field” – one where they would be “comparing apples with apples” rather than “apples with oranges”. To accomplish this, they came up with a kind of cultural Rorschach test: they asked themselves, “What might be a common point of reference that the ethnographer can find in the field, to which to compare the perceptions and practices of the various cultural groups?” What they realized was that they were surrounded by vegetation that provided an objective point of reference for them to ask members of different tribes inhabiting the same general terrain, “What do you call this plant?” and “How do you use this plant in your daily lives?” With this approach, a new discipline was born: ethnobotany – in which one studies various ethnic groups by interrogating their perceptions, descriptions, nomenclature and practices (medical, religious, nutritional) with respect to the common flora that surround them (Castaneda, 1972; Davis, 1988).

These two examples each teach the student about the phenomenological turning from facts to meanings – which is often one of the most difficult things to get across to the student unacquainted with phenomenology. And, beyond this, these same two examples can be used to teach the student the difference between noesis and noema: between how I am present to the world, and how this presence co-constitutes “what” it is that I see and experience in my world.

One of the “things” (perhaps it would be better to use the German “Sachen” or “matters”) that I most struggle with in my work as a teacher is how to bring the student to a deeper understanding – and a personal understanding – of the complicated concepts that comprise the field of phenomenology. And among the most elusive notions that we find in the works of the phenomenologists are those that pertain to our presence to meaning and our presence to other people. This is what I mean by the term “perspectivity” throughout this paper. Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty have all written extensively about what is happening when we encounter the other, and how it is that we have access to the meaning of the other’s experience. Husserl (1952/1989, p. 177) tells us that it is a matter of “trading places”, where we engage in an “empathizing perception” by means of which what is given to us in our experience is not only our own ego and its positing, but also the other ego and its positing. He tells us that this comes about by means of an Mitbefindlichkeit in which there is a “pairing” of our bodies. Heidegger (1927/1972), in turn, spoke of Mitbefindlichkeit – an ontological condition in which the very meaning of the other’s experience, as well as an understanding of our being together, is given to me in our Miteinandersein (our Being with one another). Mitbefindlichkeit has been unfortunately translated into English as a “co-state-of-mind” (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 205) – which really confuses the matter, since Heidegger almost nowhere is ever found
to even talk about the “mind” per se, and certainly would never talk about human experience as something static! So how then do we communicate to the student the meaning of this rich term, which points us in the direction of a “shared attunement” with the other? What examples do we use to communicate what we are doing when we enter phenomenologically into the “universe of meaning” of another (human) being? This is where trips to the cinema, the zoo, and the museum enter the picture as ways of facilitating the students’ dehiscence to a world of meaning.

Merleau-Ponty takes us a step further in his own rendition of Husserl’s language in his more fluid French formulations: where die Verflechtung and Ineinander become “the intertwining” and “the chiasm”; and Husserl’s phenomenon of die Paarung becomes the French “accouplement” – a “coupling” of two body subjects in which the other’s intentions play across my body while my own intentions play across his. The other’s gestures furnish my own intentions with a visible realization, to paraphrase Merleau-Ponty (1948/1964d, p. 93). We seem to be getting closer to something that might resemble something comprehensible to the first-time student of phenomenology, but we are still far from the mark, because so far we are using only words, signifiers, to express a signified that has still not come clearly into view.

Thus it is that I take my students to the zoo, and to the museum and sculpture garden, and to the cinema – not in order to get lost in the various “what’s that one finds there, but rather to bring to life the very possibilities of doing phenomenology by providing them with a rich nexus of experiences to draw upon in connecting the difficult jargon of phenomenology to their own experience. I find it more meaningful and quite rewarding to give these kinds of assignments, for when they come in it’s like reaping a harvest! And it is more fun because it is clear that the students really had a chance to think, to apply their own intelligence to a challenge (rather than juggling others’ ideas and definitions, or trying to tell the teacher something he seems to want to hear). What is interesting is that, when students are left to describe their own experiences, equipped only with some examples of descriptive writing from Merleau-Ponty – along with the prompt “walk around until you find something that resonates with you” – each student is bound to have a good experience, whether at a zoo or a museum. (Even those who have admittedly gone off a tangent)  


this in their reports, because they are now “converted” by the experience.)

In these class exercises, I have attempted to “adumbrate” the theme of “reversibilities of the flesh” via our trips to the zoo, to art museums and sculpture gardens, and to the cinema, with the aim of demonstrating that the same “approach” can yield results in so many different terrains – all based upon an application of the right attitude. The challenge for me has been to present to students a variety of opportunities for learning that would enable each student to appropriate and cultivate a mode of seeing that we might call ecstatic perception.

My interest in taking my students through these exercises has been to help them develop an appreciation of, and an aptitude for, empathy as a mode of access to the meaningfulness of expression. Sartre (1971) wrote in his existential psychoanalysis of Flaubert, “… empathie, seule attitude requise pour comprendre” [empathy is the only attitude required for understanding] (p. 8). To the extent that the original concept of empathy referred to a “motor mimicry” (Lipps, 1903), it is appropriate, perhaps even paradigmatic, to develop a psychological methodology based on empathy out of a consideration of the phenomenon of imitation. For Merleau-Ponty, conduct is always revealed as a lived-structure, and “to experience a structure … is to live it, to take it up, assume it and discover its immanent significance” (1945/1962, p. 258). Wilhelm Reich observed, “The patient’s expressive movements involuntarily bring about an imitation in our own organism” (Reich, 1933/1972, p. 362). We sense in and through our own bodies the intentions and affects that animate the other, and simultaneously understand our tacit experience as significative of the other’s expression. One psychologist went so far as to say that “when we cannot imitate an individual’s behaviour we are at a loss to understand it” (Kempf, quoted in Allport, 1937, p. 530). Finally, David Katz (1937) observed: “the fact that we can inwardly imitate and understand our fellow-men is in itself astonishing enough, but our capacity to understand directly other living beings through their expressive movements includes even animals” (p. 51). The verb nacherleben as used by Dilthey (1927/1977, pp. 132-133) meant, quite literally, to make “live again” in oneself what one has perceived in the other. If an act of imitation is truly a “re-enactment” (Nacherleben) of an already perceived ensemble of gestures, then imitation is the expression of a latent impression – of a tacit knowledge that belongs to the body. The point of this digression is to indicate that second person perspectivity takes us into our “lived” or embodied encounters with others, and asks us to pay close attention to what is revealed to us when we “face” the other.
Closing Remarks

I have come to recognize that the difference between first person and second person perspectives reflects the fact that, in the former, one remains enveloped within one’s own position, looking over “at” the other – while, in the “second person” experience, one notices a subtle shift in one’s consciousness, away from one’s own body, one’s own comportment, towards a centring on the communicative and otherwise intentional gestures coming towards oneself from one’s “partner”. In this thinking from rather than thinking at, one is drawn deeper into the encounter. This is as true for the perception of another as it is for the perception of art. What we referred to earlier as a fidelity to the object of perception comes down to this very notion of how we are present to it. Our presence to a captive animal in a zoo (or even to a captive animal in our own home) is radically transformed when we step up really close, closer than others do, putting our faces and our bodies right up to the glass, standing on the animal’s level – on the same fake boulder that holds the glass wall, our feet and arms only an inch apart, our hands open and placed up against the glass, “touching” each other while looking into each other’s eyes.

There is a feeling of mutual respect that humbles one in such moments. A sense of fidelity to the animal other’s nature as soul-brother calls one to consider one’s own ethics in one’s dealings with all animals (See Acampora, 2006; Churchill, 2010). What I learned from this and many subsequent visits to the zoo has been documented elsewhere, but I make reference to this set of experiences in order to enable the reader to have a concrete sense of “where I’m coming from” in my approach to what I am calling here the second person perspective. Part of the point is that this experience not only transcends the human level toward animal life in general; it also provides us with the concrete experience within which we hear the ethical call that summons us to respond with compassion.

Genuine phenomenology is itself a practice – and never just an intellectual pursuit – by which one discovers and celebrates one’s own immersion in a flux of experience that is the true source of all that we come to know and believe regarding the world. It consists in the realization that it is precisely one’s own presence to the world that is the illuminating source and matrix of all that we come to understand about life. It draws us back – or at least, it points us in this direction – to the ways in which the world resonates with our experiencing. And it is this resonance with the world that we learn to trust as informing our reflections on whatever it is that surrounds us, and how it is that we are challenged to comport ourselves vis-à-vis our surroundings. This phenomenology of experience is our starting point for our encounter with others (and hence the deep and abiding value of phenomenology for the practising psychotherapist); it is our starting point for our encounters with works of art, for our encounters with other cultures, for our encounters with all symbolic universes of meaning.

11I wish to thank my first philosophy teacher, F. David Martin (Professor Emeritus of Bucknell University), for his inspiring way of capturing these two fundamentally different modes of approaching the world.
Referencing Format


About the Author

Scott D. Churchill earned his PhD in clinical phenomenological psychology at Duquesne University with an empirical-phenomenological dissertation on psychodiagnostics. He is currently Professor and Graduate Programme Director in the Psychology Department at the University of Dallas, where he has been teaching for three decades. Professionally focused on the understanding of various forms of expression, both human and non-human, he is interested in the development of phenomenological and hermeneutic methodologies, and has taught a wide variety of courses ranging from primatology and projective techniques to film studies, existential phenomenology and Daseinsanalysis. In addition to developing the notion of “second person perspectivity” in relation to qualitative research, ethology, and health care, Professor Churchill is currently engaged in an ongoing experiential study of interspecies communication with the bonobos at the Fort Worth Zoo, and is a local co-ordinator for Jane Goodall’s Roots & Shoots programme.


Professor Churchill is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, a liaison to its Science Directorate, Past President of the Division of Humanistic Psychology, and an active member of the executive board of the Society for Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology. He has also served as a visiting professor at Duquesne University, Saybrook Graduate School, Pacifica Graduate Institute in Santa Barbara, and Macquarie University in Sydney, as well as at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, the University of Konstanz, and the University of Bari. In addition to his contribution in the professional sphere, he has served in Dallas as a film critic for local television, and been an invited juror at Dallas film and video festivals, for over 25 years.

E-mail Address: bonobo@udallas.edu

References


Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964e). The child’s relations with others (W. Cobb, Trans.). In M. Merleau-Ponty, *The primacy of perception: And other essays on phenomenological psychology, the philosophy of art, history and politics* (J. M. Edie, Ed.) (pp. 96-155). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1960)


This course will prepare the student for conducting qualitative inquiry in psychology by implementing the following objectives:

1. Learning how to formulate a research question.
2. Learning how to collect and analyze qualitative data.
3. Learning how to formulate results and present them in a format conducive to peer review and verification.

To this end, the class will be asked to engage in the following activities:

1. Independent study and reflection upon assigned texts.
2. Preparation for class by completing assigned readings and analyses prior to class.
3. Regular attendance of class sessions.

This course will explore the tensions between methodology and research practice. The first several classes will be devoted to lectures presenting (a) major themes of a phenomenological psychology and (b) those authors whose work has influenced the development of the phenomenological alternative to psychology. As the course proceeds, we will implement a “cooperative workshop” approach where we will engage in direct data-analysis to enhance the student’s ability to “see” and “read” human expression psychologically. Lectures will always presuppose
familiarity with the texts assigned. The purpose of the readings and lectures will be to clarify what is meant by a phenomenological approach to doing psychology.

It will be the aim of the subsequent workshop sessions (later in the semester) to actually carry out the task of doing psychology phenomenologically; as such, these workshops themselves will be a methodological appropriation of the phenomenological approach presented in the lectures and readings. Here we will consider the possibility of doing a phenomenological psychology of experience based on what one sees not only with one’s own eyes but also through the eyes of others. We will draw upon naive descriptions collected from research subjects in order to attempt to carry out a “hermeneutic” understanding of the other's experience. The purpose here will be both to attune the participants to some of the contingencies of qualitative research and to sharpen their awareness of what phenomenologists call the intentional structure of experience. Throughout all of the group exercises, questions of access to the phenomenon and of the validity and value of the findings will be raised.

Because of the “cooperative” nature of the workshops, assigned exercises cannot be accepted late; it is the responsibility of each participant to be prepared to present his or her findings to the group and to give feedback to other members regarding their findings. The emphasis here is on participation, not performance. No one is being asked to try to out-shine the others in the group with their brilliance; rather, as this will be a group effort, it is important that each participant contribute something. Everyone will have something to offer.

**Historical Background for the Course**

Anticipating his magnum opus *Being and Time* (1927), the theme of Heidegger’s lecture courses from 1921-1924 was a field of investigation Heidegger referred to as “the phenomenological hermeneutics of facticity.” The focus of these lectures, which were grounded in Heidegger's close reading of Aristotle’s seminal texts, was the “be-ing there” of human life “in the awhileness of its temporal particularity.” His 1921-1922 and 1923 lecture courses culminated with descriptions of “relationality,” “significance,” “caring,” “disclosedness,” “availability,” “familiarity,” “the unpredictable,” “ruinance,” and “the character of the world's being-encountered.”

Selections from hermeneutic philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (*Understanding of Other Persons and Their Expressions of Life*) and other more contemporary writers such as the late Jan van den Berg (*Psychology of the Sickbed, A Different Existence*) will be brought into dialogue with methodological articles in
phenomenological psychology by Sartre, Colaizzi, Giorgi, von Eckartsberg, Fischer, Wertz, Churchill, Garza, Romanyszyn, Keen, and Dahlberg.

**Basic Outline of Readings**

*(Please note: Heidegger readings will be periodically updated on eCollege)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 26/27</td>
<td>Biddle &amp; Locke: chs 1, 2; van den Berg: <em>Psychology of Sickbed</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2/3</td>
<td>Dahlberg pp 23-65 “phenomenology” and van den Berg: chs 1,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 9/10</td>
<td>Dahlberg 65-94; “hermeneutics” and Romanyszyn (“the wounded researcher”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 16/17</td>
<td>Dahlberg 95-120; “openness” and von Eckartsberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 23/24</td>
<td>Dahlberg 122-169; Heidegger “Herm” (1-16); Colaizzi, Garza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 7-15</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK - van den Berg and Castaneda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 16/17</td>
<td>Dahlberg 205-229 “field observation” and Heidegger: pp 17-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 23/24</td>
<td>Dahlberg 231-276 “data analysis” and Heidegger: pp 40-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 30/31</td>
<td>Wertz: “Being Criminally Victimized” pdf; Watanabe (thesis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr (6)/7</td>
<td>Dahlberg 276-323 “interpretive analysis” and Heidegger: 61-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 13/14</td>
<td>Dahlberg 325-350 and Giorgi (“the ineffable”) THP article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 20/21</td>
<td>Biddle &amp; Locke: chs 3,4 and Sartre “Emotions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 27/28</td>
<td>Research Reports Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 4/5</td>
<td>Research reports (continued)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please note that we will plan to start each class by 2:05pm [since Lynch clocks are not synchronized with satellite time] and sometimes continue right up to 5:00pm, unless anyone has a conflict with staying until 5 (and also presuming there is no one scheduled immediately after us.). We will try to take one or two breaks per class, though generally no more than 20 minutes total between 2 and 5 pm.

Please also note that each week there can be additional reading assignments posted on eCollege, beyond the guidelines posted on the syllabus.

For the first week, students should familiarize themselves with each of the required texts by perusing the prefaces, translators’ introductions, and reading the first 22 pages of Dahlberg’s text as well as van den Berg’s Psychology of the Sickbed.

Supplemental articles in pdf will be posted soon to eCollege. There’s plenty there in van den Berg’s A Different Existence, and Dahlberg’s text to keep you going. We also assigned the Biddle text Composing Qualitative Research. chs 1-2.

It will take some time for you to make your way through these readings, a little at a time. The syllabus merely attempts to pace you through the readings. The syllabus assignments you should continue making your way through on your own, as the semester progresses. Again, the syllabus will be a guide, a prompt. Class lectures will always complement the texts; but not necessarily present them systematically. Our primary sources are not “text books” that instructors might then present in bite sized chunks; rather, they comprise the works in the field with which you'll be expected to develop a personal acquaintance. Your personal familiarity with these texts assigned for your edification will enable you to have the background necessary to be able to understand references made to them in the lectures.

However, the articles that we’re going to be discussing in class will always be made explicit, and with advanced notice! So you'll never have to worry about being held accountable for something on a given week, unless I've specifically indicated that this is what you'll need to have read. We’ll try to follow a mellow approach to the readings: read them and let them “mellow” in your experience. This is how you will “absorb” phenomenology – through a personal identification with the voices you are listening to in the readings: that is the secret to internalizing and cultivating a phenomenological voice of your own.
There will be required participation in a *class research project*, which will be written up in the form of a *qualitative research report* that will be due in class on Tuesday April 28th. (Absolutely NO extensions can be granted.)

(Since this is not the type of assignment that can be completed once the semester is over, there will be no Incompletes granted (and hence, anyone who falls behind will need to drop the course by the date posted by the Registrar, which is Friday April 3rd).

**A final exam will be given on the date assigned by the Registrar, or may be replaced with a final paper.**

**The student’s final grade will be based primarily upon:**

(a) a research “term paper”
(b) a final exam (or a section to be added to the term paper)
(c) participation in the workshops will also be figured into the final grade

Note: The Registrar requires grades for every student, and some folks who may not have requested Incompletes may nonetheless be assigned an Incomplete in the class if your work is not turned in by the assigned deadline. There can be no extensions to final deadlines (especially if I will be leaving the country and I need to bring all hard copies with me. I cannot always count on having electronic access to your papers, so the hard copies are rather essential. Your working notes from the class seminars will be attached to your paper as an appendix. (These working notes would be your data analyses, etc., out of which you fashioned your findings.)

The Research Term Paper will be your write-up of the class analysis of data that shall engage us for a good portion of the semester. It shall include strong evidence of your having read the assigned texts and pdfs - and thus you should make copious references to these readings in your paper itself. You should ask yourself, does this paper demonstrate that I have mastered the texts assigned? Is there direct evidence in the paper of your having read the many articles on research by pioneers in the field? Realize that your grade will be based upon how well you give comprehensive proof of your having spent time reading the articles and books. Rather than being based, then, on just one or two main sources, your final papers should show your acquaintanceship with the course readings as a whole. Your bibliography presented in your Reference section should present the full “cross section” of readings assigned. You should aim for inclusiveness, so that the reader can actually “see” the impact of the readings on your understanding of method.
**REQUIRED TEXTS**

http://www.amazon.com/Composing-Qualitative-Research-Karen-Golden-Biddle/dp/1412905613/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1349015285&sr=1-1&keywords=composing+qualitative

Golden-Biddle & Locke: *Composing Qual Research* ($19 used copies)


http://www.amazon.com/Different-Existence-Principles-Phenomenological-Psychopathology/dp/0820702447/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1349014138&sr=8-1&keywords=van+den+berg

van den Berg (1972): *A Different Existence* ($17.50)

http://www.amazon.com/Ontology---Hermeneutics-Facticity-Studies-Continental/dp/0253220211/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1348849898&sr=1-1&keywords=heidegger+ontology

Heidegger: *Ontology - Hermeneutics of Facticity* (1923 Lectures)

http://www.amazon.com/Introduction-Phenomenological-Research-Studies-Continental/dp/0253345707/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1417229902&sr=1-1&keywords=Heidegger%3A+introduction+to+phenomenological+research

Heidegger: *Intro to Phenomenological Research* (1923-1924 Lectures)


Heidegger: *The Concept of Time: The First Draft of Being and Time* (1924)


Jean-Paul Sartre: “The Emotions” (section two of this collection)

We are defined by the choices we make and by our commitments to those choices. Such a position takes us well beyond any concept of natural determinism. In *Existentialism is a Humanism* (Yale Press, 2007, p 49), Sartre writes: “man is a free being who, under any circumstances, can only ever will his freedom; I have at the same time acknowledged that I must will the freedom of others.”
RECOMMENDED

April Morgan: Investigating our Experience

http://www.amazon.com/Phenomenology-Psychological-Research-Amedeo-Giorgi/dp/0820701742/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1348851495&sr=1-2&keywords=giorgi
Amedeo Giorgi

http://www.guilford.com/books/Five-Ways-of-Doing-Qualitative-Analysis/Wertz-Charmaz-McMullen-Josselson/9781609181420
Wertz: Five Ways

http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/0306455439/ref=sr_1_3_twil_1_olp?ie=UTF8&qid=1417229391&sr=8-3&keywords=ron+valle
Ron Valle: Phenomenological Inquiry in Psychology

http://www.amazon.com/Existential-foundations-psychology-Duquesne-Psychological/dp/080663724X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1417230202&sr=1-1&keywords=van+kaam%3A+existential+foundations
Van Kaam: Existential Foundations

http://www.amazon.com/Exploring-Lived-World-Phenomenological-Psychology/dp/0306455439/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1417230290&sr=1-12&keywords=aanstoos%3A+exploring+the+lived+world
Aanstoos: Exploring the Lived World

http://www.amazon.com/Loves-Pivotal-Relationships-Intimate-Partner/dp/1434319040/ref=sr_1_5?ie=UTF8&qid=1417230290&sr=1-5&keywords=aanstoos%3A+exploring+the+lived+world
Alapack: Love’s Pivotal Relationships

http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/0671732463/ref=tmm_pap_used_olp_sr?ie=UTF8&condition=used&sr=1-3&qid=1422350301
Carlos Castaneda: Journey to Ixtlan – The Lessons of Don Juan
Anticipating the existential-hermeneutic analysis of factual Dasein in *Being and Time* (1927), the theme of Heidegger’s lecture courses from 1921-1924 was a field of investigation Heidegger referred to as “the phenomenological hermeneutics of facticity.” The focus of these lectures, which were grounded in Heidegger’s close reading of Aristotle’s seminal texts, was the “be-ing there” of human life “in the awhileness of its temporal particularity.” The history of hermeneutics was reviewed by Heidegger (1923/1999) with reference to Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Scheler, and Dilthey among others. His 1921-1922 and 1923 lecture courses culminated with descriptions of “relationality,” “significance,” “disclosedness,” “availability,” “familiarity”, “the unpredictable,” and “the character of the world’s being-encountered.” His lecture course of 1923-1924 presented his critique of Husserlian phenomenology in the light of his reading of Aristotle. Although much of our coverage of Heidegger’s lectures on hermeneutics will be expository, there will be moments where we will indulge in our own efforts to render intelligible some of his more challenging musings.

Selections from Dilthey (*The Understanding of Other Persons and Their Expressions of Life*) and other more contemporary writers such as the late Jan van den Berg (*Psychology of the Sickbed, A Different Existence*) will be brought into dialogue with methodological articles in phenomenological psychology by Colaizzi, Giorgi, Wertz, Churchill, Romanyszyn, and Dahlberg. Students will engage in an application of hermeneutic principles by engaging in their own phenomenological research utilizing interview data written by members of the class on a topic pertaining to an emotional experience.

**Seminar Design**

This course will explore the tensions between methodology and research practice. The first several classes will be devoted to lectures presenting (a) major themes of a phenomenological psychology and (b) those authors whose work has influenced the development of the phenomenological alternative to psychology. As the course proceeds, we will implement a “cooperative workshop” approach where we will engage in direct data-analysis to enhance the student’s ability to “see” and “read” human expression psychologically. Lectures will always presuppose familiarity with the texts assigned. The purpose of the readings and lectures will be to clarify what is meant by a phenomenological approach to doing psychology.
It will be the aim of the subsequent workshops to actually carry out the task of doing psychology phenomenologically; as such, the workshops themselves will be a methodological appropriation of the phenomenological approach presented in the lectures and readings. Here we will consider the possibility of doing a phenomenological psychology of experience based on what one sees not only with one’s own eyes but also through the eyes of others.

We will draw upon naive descriptions collected from research subjects in order to attempt to carry out a “hermeneutic” understanding of the other’s experience. The purpose here will be both to attune the participants to some of the contingencies of qualitative research and to sharpen their awareness of what phenomenologists call the intentional structure of experience. Throughout all of the group exercises, questions of access to the phenomenon and of the validity and value of the findings will be raised. Because of the “cooperative” nature of the workshops, assigned exercises cannot be accepted late.

It will be the responsibility of each participant to be prepared to present his or her findings to the group and to give feedback to other members regarding their findings. The emphasis here is on participation, not performance. No one is being asked to try to out-shine the others in the group with their brilliance; rather, as this will be a group effort, it is important that each participant contribute something. Everyone will have something to offer.

The aim of the research workshops will be to prepare students for conducting qualitative inquiry in psychology by implementing the following objectives:

1. Learning how to formulate a research question.
2. Learning how to collect and analyze qualitative data.
3. Learning how to formulate results and present them in a format conducive to peer review and verification.

**COURSE WORK AND WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS**

Each week there will be reading assignments posted on Blackboard. For the first week, students should familiarize themselves with each of the required texts by perusing the prefaces, translators’ introductions, and reading the first two chapters of Abram’s text *The Spell of the Sensuous*. Students will be required to keep a weekly journal of their reflections on the course texts, to be kept in the form of an ongoing (cumulative) word file that will be sent to the instructor via email attachment each week (no later than noon Wednesday). The first journal will be due on January 30th and then each week until April 24th.
TERM PAPERS

In addition to the journal there will be required participation in a class research project, which will be written up in the form of a qualitative research report that will be due by midnight on Tuesday April 30th. (Absolutely NO extensions will be granted.)

A final reflective paper will be due by noon on May 10th. The reflective paper will be a self-encounter in the form of a ‘hermeneutics of one’s own factual life’ with respect to the taking up of the course texts. Insofar as “hermeneutics” is itself a discipline that was born of the challenge of interpreting texts, the student’s challenge during this semester will be to engender within oneself a personal relationship with the assigned texts.

The journal will serve to ensure that, each week, every student will engage in some degree of reflective work, in dialogue with the assigned readings. The journal itself will in the end comprise a text by means of which the student will encounter his or her own trajectory through the course, throughout the semester. The cumulative record of each student’s journal will serve as the material to be confronted in this final reflective exercise, and will be attached to the term paper as an appendix.

(Since this is not the type of assignment that can be completed once the semester is over, there will be no Incompletes granted (and hence, anyone who falls behind will need to drop the course by the date posted by the Registrar, which is Friday April 5th).
Explanation of Appendices

Please note that in order for me to evaluate your reflective papers, I need to first review your semester's journals. After reading through all of the "data" upon which your paper was based, I then read the reflective analysis. (In much the same way that in your research reports, I looked to the appendix where I should be able to read the data (meaning unit) followed by your reflective analysis of that unit. The evaluation of a reflection is facilitated by first reading the "data" (or in this case, journal) upon which it is based. The two need to be read together.

Thus, if the reflective paper was not submitted along with a print-out of the journals themselves, as per syllabus description, I will have to wait until I have a printed copy of your journals before evaluating the paper. Similarly, if the meaning units were presented in your research reports without the analysis, I will have to wait until I have those analyses - upon which the psychological re-telling was to be based - before I can really evaluate the data analysis and narrative structure.

I actually do read all of the appendices requested. So please understand that I cannot read your papers and then go back and read the appendices later; the first thing I do before reading your Results is read through the analyses in the appendix; and likewise, with these reflective papers, the first thing that I do is review your journal work from start to finish all the way through, and then turn to the papers as a culminating reflection.

I usually don't go explaining this whole process; I just indicate in the syllabus from the beginning that the final paper will have all journals attached as an appendix.

In light of this, I will place the papers that I have collected into two piles -- "complete" (which I shall read right away) and "incomplete" (which I shall read as soon as I have the journals to attach to them).
Reading Assignments

(plus pdf files on Blackboard)

Jan 30: Dahlberg: pp 23-65 (“Phenomenology”); Abram’s *Spell of the Sensuous* Chs 1-2; Heidegger’s *Aristotle*: to p 14; 61-67

Feb 6: Dahlberg 65-94 (“Hermeneutics”); Heidegger’s *Aristotle*: 67-75

Feb 13: Heidegger’s *Aristotle*: 75-82 -- plus readings posted to Blackboard

Feb 20: Dahlberg 95-111 (“Openness”); Heidegger’s *Aristotle*: review 70-82; read 83-87; van den Berg Chs 1-2

Feb 27: Heidegger’s *Aristotle*: 87-97; Blackboard postings: Fischer (Being-anxious) and Churchill (Emotional Expression)

March 6: Heidegger’s *Ontology*: 1-16; Dahlberg 111-169 (“Bridling”)

DUE: written protocol on “an emotional experience”

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**SPRING BREAK**

March 20: [no reading homework in honor of spring break; just protocol analysis]

March 27: Heidegger "Aristotle" 126-130; Dahlberg 171-205 (Interviewing)

April 3: Heidegger "Ontology" 17-39; Dahlberg 231-276 (Data Analysis)

April 10: Heidegger "Ontology" 40-60; Dahlberg 276-323 (Interpretive Analysis)

April 17: Heidegger "Ontology" 61-80; Dahlberg 325-350 (Lifeworld Research)

April 24: Heidegger "Phen Research" 1-39; Wertz "Being Criminally Victimized"

May 1: Heidegger “Phen Research" 47-59; 64-77; 79-84

Dilthey "Understanding"

May 8: Heidegger "Phen Research" 196-221
REQUIRED TEXTS:

**Heidegger: Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle (1921-22 Lectures)

http://www.amazon.com/Ontology---Hermeneutics-Facticity-Studies-Continental/dp/0253220211/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1348849898&sr=1-1&keywords=heidegger+ontology
**Heidegger: Ontology - Hermeneutics of Facticity (1923 Lectures)

http://www.amazon.com/Introduction-Phenomenological-Research-Studies-Continental/dp/0253345707/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1349015358&sr=1-2-fkmr0&keywords=heidegger+intro+to+phenomenological+research
**Heidegger: Introduction to Phenomenological Research (1923-24 Lectures)

**Dahlberg 2nd edition (2008)

http://www.amazon.com/Composing-Qualitative-Research-Karen-Golden-Biddle/dp/1412905613/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1349015285&sr=1-1&keywords=composing+qualitative
**Composing Qualitative Research ($19 used copies)

http://www.amazon.com/Different-Existence-Principles-Phenomenological-Psychopathology/dp/0820702447/ref=sr_1_1?qid=1349014138&sr=8-1&keywords=van+den+berg
**van den Berg (1972): A Different Existence ($17.50)

**Abram (1996): Spell of the Sensuous ($10.66)

RECOMMENDED TITLES:

http://www.amazon.com/Five-Ways-Doing-Qualitative-Analysis/dp/1609181425/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1348852496&sr=1-1&keywords=wertz
**Wertz (2011) Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Research
**Giorgi (2009) Descriptive Phenomenological Method**

**Giorgi (1985) Phenomenology and Psychological Research**

**Kaufmann: Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre**

("Headers" thus best include your last names - as I explained in one of my classes recently (perhaps not ours), if a handful of term papers are dropped down a flight of stairs, and they were each paper clipped, you can end up with many numbered pages, but no idea which goes with which. Hence the invention of a "header" as a way of further identifying a manuscript page as belonging to a particular paper.)

ps: this then explains the difference between a "header" and a "running head". A "header" is something that appears at the top of a Manuscript page, as a way of showing that all of the pages of that MS belong together (in case they are ever separated).

A "Running Head" is what you place on the first (cover) page of a Manuscript submitted for publication; it is how you would like for your paper title to be abbreviated when it is eventually published and the publisher places an identifying "brief title" on the top of the pages on one side or the other. (The other side of an open journal or open book chapter usually has your name as the running head. So looking at the top of the two open pages in a journal or book chapter allows the reader to see the author's name and an abbreviated title, as a way of identifying the pages themselves.)

Running heads are thus a formality when submitting a paper for publication; whereas, headers are essential when turning in term papers in order to be sure your name and paper topic are indicated at the top of every manuscript page - (in case you forget to put your name on the front page!)
Blackboard Postings

Protocol Analysis: First Steps in Data Handling:

1. Read and re-read the protocol several times (until you can begin to predict what happens next).

2. Jot down first impressions (see link to notes on first impressions)

3. Divide into units of expression -- phrases or statements that contain a self-evident meaning, a sense that you can capture in a few words, at the basic level of description - cleansing your language of constructs, keeping simple - underlining the sense of the data's own use of language (don't translate into jargon or formal terms from the review of the literature).

4. Begin to pose your research interest to the data: you need to begin by first asking yourself, what is it that I hope to learn from my analysis of this data? What do I think is inherent in this description that I could do a successful analysis of? (That's the bottom line, isn't it? One may start a phenomenological investigation thinking one is searching for one thing; and then down the way you discover that you are going for something quite other than what you thought. You discover this because your let the data show you your phenomenon; not the lit review. (Sometimes, it is even better to let the lit review come after the initial piloting, so that the piloting can show you the way to what you should be looking for!)

KEEP IN MIND: a senior thesis is really a kind of a pilot study: it can't possibly try to answer the whole question that you have in mind; it can only start to show you the way.

Follow the language!! That is Heidegger's way -- as it was also Freud's way!

Hermeneutic Criteria for Dividing into Meaning Units:

Recap of March 20th class:

discussing the difference between Giorgi's "natural" meaning units (divided before applying research question) and my "hermeneutic modification" of that method (dividing into units in light of the research interest). Research interest is usually misunderstood as some general vague question such as "what is the meaning of the data" -- and my response is, duh, that's the starting point and therefore doesn't advance us further. So, the idea of the previous Announcement's link to First Impressions was to get those written down so that you could see, in retrospect, that those impressions are themselves a clue to what you are seeking -- because they are what you "liked" in the data. So, in showing you a preliminary sense of your "findings" you can begin to better articulate the implicit question(s) that you are posing to the data.

Re-reading the protocol from the perspective of those impressions (ie, reframed as 'interests') allows you to apply those interests to the data "hermeneutically".

So now that you've written down your first impressions, the idea is to use those impressions to articulate your research interests, and then to further divide the data into
units according to those interests, and then to tag each unit with a "theme" that is expressed, and then to try to elaborate that theme descriptively (ie, cleansed of constructs or explanatory terms).

We also noted, in connection with the Heidegger reading, how Gabby's protocol manifests Heidegger's "subjective" (possessive) genitive in regards to the expression "hermeneutics of facticity": the self-interpretive move on Gabby's own part, throughout her experience, to try to make sense of what was happening to her. Her own protocol represents a first order hermeneutics taking place between herself at the time and what she was undergoing/enduring: she was at every step along the way trying to interpret what was happening; this is the hermeneutics that 'belongs' to her factual life {facticity's own hermeneutics - the "possessive genitive"}. And then there is the second order hermeneutics, whereby we are reading her protocol and taking her factual life as the object of our hermeneutics - what Heidegger refers to as the "objective" genitive within the expression 'hermeneutics of facticity' - where we take her facticity as our object of study.

Geoffrey mentioned in class that what we were doing was directly expressive of what he understood to be the essence of Ricoeur's version of hermeneutics. So I might invite him in a subsequent class to discuss that for us.

The Hermeneutic Circle:

Maybe something that arises here, at the beginning of our first data analysis, is that we end up jumping into a particular emotion without discussing first what kinds of characteristics might we wish to be seeking. As phenomenologists, we always say we're looking for meanings while looking at human experiences. So at first, a simple answer to the Befragtes/Gefratges distinction is to say that we are looking at experiences and looking for meetings. We are doing a study of the protocol, about the meaning of the experience. But sometimes that is not enough to put us on the track of a deeper understanding.

So we might introduce something that comes out of a "first impression." For example, one of my first impressions (which I did not share in class because I wanted students to begin with their own) was this: is panic anxiety lived as just the panic state itself? or is there a reflexive dimension where what accelerates the anxiety (until it becomes full blown "panic") is a heightened awareness of one's own body, of one's physical reactions? Regardless of what a neurophysiologist might tell us, is there a dimension of panic anxiety, as revealed in Gabby's protocol, that involves what we might call one's interpretation of one's bodily experience? And can we consider such a tendency towards self-interpretation to be an essential dimension of panic attacks? Are the concerns expressed by Gabby in her recollection of what was "going through her mind" at the time something that Heidegger might have considered to be the "hermeneutics" belonging to Gabby's "facticity"? A self-reflexive and self-aware aspect of panic anxiety wherein one's interpretation of one's anxious bodily experiencing is itself a part within the whole that
we call a "panic attack"?

This kind of "first impression," which comes to me as I reflect on her protocol, can be used as an "about which" that guides me as I conduct my analysis of the protocol. It can influence how and where I divide the narrative into sections for further reflection. Once I have a clear sense of this first question that I will be posing to the data, the next step will become more clear to me. If I have several first impressions from reading the data, then I find a way of gathering them together into a "perspective" from which to view the data. Following Heidegger, in Being and Time, where he speaks of the threefold structure of understanding as consisting of a fore-having, a fore-conception, and a foresight.

As I begin to ponder Gabby's protocol from the perspective of my first impression regarding her self-interpretive experience - guided also by my fore-having of Heidegger's approach to interpretation as well as his belief in the self-interpretation that 'belongs to' human factual life, I find my "sight" already guided in advance towards those moments within the data where Gabby is reflectively engaged in an assessment of what is happening to her (the Befragtes), and then I ask myself, what do her bodily disturbances signify to her? (which is now my Gefragtes - what I am asking about).

At this point, I am ready to look back upon the data, delineate moments within the data where my research question is being addressed, and then to proceed to identify themes within each unit of expression that point to deeper dimensions (the "hermeneutic dimensions") that appear to me through the lens of the foresight afforded to me by my first impressions. The circularity here is what is meant by "the hermeneutic circle."

**Preparing your Psychological “Re-telling” of the Participant’s Story:**

Now that you are writing up your "results" in the form of a psychological re-telling of Gabby's story, you may wish to consult the article comparing three protocol analyses, which was based upon a qualitative research class in the summer of 1990.

In it you will find three different ways of organizing a results section, two of which (Aruna's and Owen's) include a psychological re-telling of the story in the form of an individual narrative referred to as an "integrative scenario." In addition, two of them gleaned "themes" from the data as findings (Lowery and Rao). Often, the movement in producing the findings of a study is from data to themes to integrative scenario. However, in our own case, I am moving all of you directly to the integrative re-telling of Gabby's experience, after which we will go back and pull out "themes" that we will use as a basis for considering individual vs general findings.

To assist you in your quest, please observe the following:

1. Read William Fischer's article on "Empirical Phenomenological Study of Being-
Emotional" - here he demonstrates how to read data both idiographically and nomothetically - retelling the participant's story in a "situated structure" and then moving towards a more general understanding in a "general structure."

2. Look at my short article "Stories of Experience..." particularly the second half where I am talking about cultivating a "sensitivity to meaning" in reading data.

3. Look closely at Dahlberg's text: "a surplus of meaning" (p 117ff); "the whole - the parts - the whole" (p 236 ff); and the rich section simply entitled: "Descriptive Analysis" (pp 241-256).

4. Revisit the Wertz article on "Being Criminally Victimized"

Second Drafts of Research Reports:

These second drafts will be due on the day assigned by the Registrar for a final exam, by 5 pm - printed and delivered either to the Psych Office or slipped under my door.

Your psychological re-tellings and themes at the individual level were all quite impressive for first- or second-time researchers.

Just as you would need to review the books and posted articles for a final exam, you will need to make significant reference to these assigned readings in your second drafts, particularly in the Method section. Your journals should already serve as a demonstration of your personal taking up of the readings assignments; but this second draft of your Method section can also be a place where you can bring together a wider variety of references than you would have in individual journal entries.

The pedigree of Giorgi is, of course, important. However, you'll notice that there were only a couple of recommended postings of articles by Giorgi. That is because the modified version of the Duquesne method that you were taught in this class is more influenced by (a) Colaizzi's original formulation of the Duquesne method, based as much on his understanding of Heidegger as it is upon Husserl; (b) Fischer's clinical "reading between the lines" to arrive at a thematization of what psychoanalysts refer to as "unconscious" processes -- in Fischer, this is discussed in terms of self-deception (following Sartre); (c) Heidegger's pulling us away from Husserl's intuition of essences, more towards a focus on individual psychological (factical) life; and (d) my own application of Heidegger's hermeneutic principles to further augment the Colaizzi/Giorgi method in ways that Giorgi himself would probably not approve (such as the use of "first impressions" cited in two of the Blackboard postings, and a different criterion for dividing into meaning units -- ie, not Giorgi's "natural" approach).

The articles most pertinent to the procedure, would thus be: Colaizzi, Fischer, and my own (in particular the "reasons, causes, motives"; "first impressions"; "question of
reliability", etc. And of course, Giorgi -- but be careful to indicate where we strayed from his own more "simply" descriptive approach, so as not to attribute our straying from his procedure to Giorgi himself.

Finally, each of you should incorporate at least something from Heidegger's texts.

What I am hoping to achieve here is a synthesis of: (a) a research report of your findings, with (b) a final exam on all of the readings. The latter will constitute the Method sections; the former will constitute the Results.

The second draft should improve upon the first by leaving you with a permanent record of both our research workshop findings and your own more personal appropriation of the class readings.

*Composing Qualitative Research* will hopefully influence your writing style, so that no one should be using passive voice in their procedure sections; and all sections should demonstrate your appreciation for how each aspect of a research report has its own "story" to tell.

Good luck!

DrC

In addition to very carefully documenting the approach and procedure taken this semester from the course readings (both the texts and the relevant Blackboard postings cited previously), I should add the following about the re-formulation of your Discussion sections:

1. The Discussion should begin with a one-paragraph recap of the study (this almost reads like an abstract) -- see APA Style Manual if you have any question about this.

2. Following the recap, the first labeled section should be something like "Generalizability of Findings" - though you can call it what you wish. Most of you wrote very brief -- in some cases way too brief -- paragraphs stating what you thought might be generalizable. In the case of studying panic anxiety, the circumstances can vary significantly so that coming up with a "general structure" -- as Fischer did for simply "being-anxious" -- is going to be quite difficult. So I do not really expect you to be able to really come up with anything like a "general structure of panic anxiety" based on just one protocol. But what you should be able to do is at least address the question of generalizability of your findings at the individual level, showing which themes, if any, you examined critically and decided might be common dimensions in panic attacks; and, beyond that, why do you think it is difficult to generalize from one case for this kind of experience? (A simple variation in my imagination: I can imagine someone panicking because they've taken drugs and are having a terrible reaction, and fear calling for help. And they
might not be able to distinguish between the bad side effects and the panic they are experiencing.) So it might be difficult to say that all panic anxiety occurs when feeling alone and abandoned in the world. However, you can always consider to what extent this may represent a sub-type of panic anxiety.

3. You should return to the literature reviewed in the Intro (Fischer and anyone else you might have included) and compare your findings at the individual level to his.

4. Discuss significant aspects of the procedure that stood out for you. Did anyone think to mention that this was a group analysis, with 7 or 8 co-researchers? Did you characterize in your procedure sections the nature of the interviewing: did we ask specific questions (the way Moustakas instructs you to do if we had read his book on phenomenological research)? Maybe this will give you an idea why we did not read his book. So how would you describe our interview style? That should go in the Procedure; but in the discussion there should be some further discussion of the procedure -- what you learned from it, and any suggestions for what you'd modify next time.

When you turn in your second drafts please attach the first draft copy on which I've made comments.

As soon as I receive the other first drafts I will begin reading them. I will be in the office tomorrow and Monday, but not Sunday.

DrC
Term Paper Assignment Based upon Your Journals

Your coursework has consisted primarily of reading course texts and Blackboard postings and reflecting on them in your journals. Now that we are at the end of the course, you will submit a class “term paper”, which will be an integrative synthesis of the various ideas that had an impact on your during the semester.

From the Class Syllabus:

A final reflective paper will be due by noon on May 10th. The reflective paper will be a self-encounter in the form of a ‘hermeneutics of one’s own factual life’ with respect to the taking up of the course texts. Insofar as “hermeneutics” is itself a discipline that was born of the challenge of interpreting texts, the student’s challenge during this semester will be to engender within oneself a personal relationship with the assigned texts.

The journal will serve to ensure that, each week, every student will engage in some degree of reflective work, in dialogue with the assigned readings. The journal itself will in the end comprise a text by means of which the student will encounter his or her own trajectory through the course, throughout the semester. The cumulative record of each student’s journal will serve as the material to be confronted in this final reflective exercise, and will be attached to the term paper as an appendix.

At the end of the semester, you are now looking back upon your journals for salient themes running through the course of your own reflective work: Where did these readings and class discussions take you in your understanding of phenomenology and hermeneutics? The paper will be a synthesis of the ideas presented in the journals, and hence will be related to the journals the way research findings are related to data: The final paper thus will be an encounter with your own thinking throughout the semester.

I am thus asking you to reflect on your earlier ways of thinking about psychological research – your own “forehaving” coming into the course -- and to use the paper to develop out of this forehaving a more sophisticated understanding of psychological research as it is informed by Heidegger and the various other class readings.

Since the paper will be treated as a measure of your understanding of the class readings, your paper should include copious reference to a good selection of them from across the board: all three books by Heidegger; Dahlberg, and the postings on Blackboard.
Good luck!

Phenomenologically-Informed Qualitative Research:
Interpretive/Orienting Frames of Reference

In collecting data you can either be a collector of raw data or unpolished stones or a collector of data that includes the participants own self reflections, like collecting polished stones. Now in some cases you are going to be a collector of polished stones such as the study on tattooing, where you may not want to pretend to be the one who is able to interpret the meaning of the experiences. And so what you do is you’re bringing something like Heidegger’s interpretive frame of reference to bear on the questions that you’re going to pose to the research participants. Whereas if you are doing a study of an emotion where the person is likely not to be able to see to the deeper layers of the emotion where the emotion might have the function of masking something deeper, like anger masking hurt, you’re the one who is going to be bringing the interpretive reference to bear on these unpolished stones. And in order to polish them up and to make them more illuminative of meaning you’re going to be applying something like Heidegger’s interpretive frame of reference to the questions you pose directly to the data. So notice that there are going to be some topics where the researcher will be using a phenomenological method of analysis to place themselves in the position of the person and to then, informed by Heidegger’s ontology, to reflect upon that data to illuminate possible meanings.

There are going to be other research topics where you are not doing a phenomenological method of analysis, but what you are doing is applying the results of Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology as an interpretive frame of reference. You are using it as a hermeneutic guide to your interviewing of your research subject. So strictly speaking a hermeneutic approach takes place when you bring an interpretive frame of reference to bear, either on your own questioning of the data or the questions that you pose to the research subject to get them to reflect more deeply on their own experience. In one case you are collecting the meanings from the research participants who provide them, and in the other you are discovering the meanings in the first place by putting yourself in the position of the research participant, identifying with them, performing a phenomenological reflection on the noetic, noematic dimensions of the intentionality of the experience as you’re coming to know it through the process of empathic intuition and then thematizing these findings as your results.

A question has come up of the difference between descriptive and interpretive research. The main difference in understanding is regarding whether you are using an interpretive frame of reference such as Freud or Jung or even Heidegger as a frame of reference for translating the words of a research participant into the words and language of the researcher. When one does that, it tends to be called interpretive. When one stays at the level of everyday language describing in as detailed a way as fashioned what one is observing then we just use the word description in terms of the distinction between phenomenology and hermeneutics. Phenomenology has its descriptive and hermeneutic
approaches, the descriptive approach is the one that we usually use to refer to Husserl, and it’s the one that Giorgi follows. The hermeneutic approach to phenomenology is the one advocated by Martin Heidegger, and that’s based on his thesis that all description is already interpretation, that one cannot begin to describe without entering into an interpretive act. Where for Heidegger an interpretive act means whenever you bring to bear upon experience any form of preconception that might be something that guides your intuitions.

With regard to the move in qualitative research from data to analysis the starting point is always experience and experience itself can be looked at as a whole that can be broken into its parts. The experience by means of the participant is put into words in the form of a story or what we call a protocol. When we do phenomenological research what we seek is always a story and not a collection of facts. When we’re collecting facts or factual statements or opinions we are not collecting the kind of description that we can place ourselves into imaginatively, which would be required for us to perform a phenomenological analysis. A phenomenological analysis of experience is where we reflect on our own experience or an experience which we have made our own vicariously by reading or listening to a description. Hence the description that we listen to must be complete, must be detailed, and preferably written in everyday language, not formal or psychological language. When we analyze a description and engage in a phenomenological method of analysis what we are doing is always bringing some kind of interpretive frame of reference to bear on the questions that we pose to the data, on the questions that we pose to our own reading of the data and ultimately is the question that we will be posing to our imaginative taking up of the experience of the person who wrote the description.

When we collect data from other people, the subject, the research participant is going to be the person providing the analysis so to speak. We still are informed by an interpretive frame of reference, except we are using the interpretive frame of reference to guide the questions we will pose to the research participant. So for example, the case of the student who wants to research tattooing as a mode of self expression, in such a phenomenon of the meaning of the act of getting tattooed, the meanings that we’re going to reveal are going to be the meanings that tattooing has for the person. That means we don’t want to presume to be putting ourselves into that person’s place and imaginatively guessing at what their private meanings might be. Hence we’re not going to perform a phenomenological reflection on the data, instead we’re going to be performing a hermeneutic reflection on the data to the extent that the data itself will include both the experience of getting tattooed and the meanings that the tattoo has for the person. In other words in conducting that kind of research we invite the research participant to be the one who provides the meaning of the experience and not just the description of the facts of it. The research participant is the one who is going to move from the facts of what took place to the meanings that those facts held for the person. And in order for us to get to those meanings we interview them in such a way that we let them know what we’re interested in. And what we’re interested in is guided by the interpretive frame of reference, whether Jungian, Freudian, Heideggerian, what have you.
That said we have two different approaches so far discussed in class. We have the approach where we’re going to be collecting naïve data, which are like unpolished stones and our job is to polish them by reflecting upon those raw experiences and by imaginatively placing ourselves into the place of the person who wrote the protocol and by using our powers of reflection guided by our own internalization of, for example Heideggerian concepts, for us to reflect on our vicarious experience of the participants experience and for us to discover the latent meanings that will be made thematic. In the case of this other kind of research where we realize that it is the research participants that are the only ones who can really inform us of the deeper meanings of their experience and that would be on topics such as the social act of getting a tattoo. The intentionality of such acts is best left to be derived from the experiencer themselves. So in that case, what is the role of the researcher? We still have to be guided by an interpretive frame of reference, except in this case what we direct that frame of reference toward is posing questions to the research participant for them to be able to probe deeper into the meanings of their experience. On the one hand we’re gathering uncut stones and our job is to polish them, and in the other case we’re collecting polished stones that we have helped the person to polish according to our questions. You can either be collecting raw stones and polishing them or you can be collecting polished stones. But that still requires a certain degree of being informed and being able to elicit the polished stones, artfully through a careful interviewing process.