

In Order to Understand:

Doing Phenomenology according to the Vancouver-School

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The Content of the Webinar

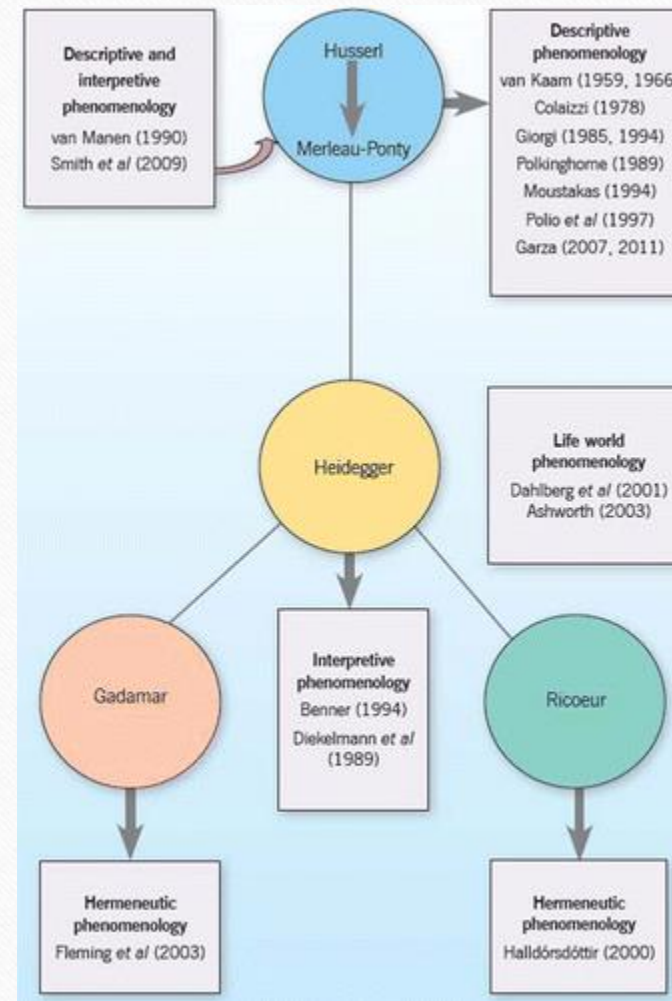
- In this webinar I will discuss phenomenology as a research methodology and about a few other phenomenological schools.
- I will discuss the Vancouver-School of Doing Phenomenology in more depth than the others.



There are Many Phenomenological Schools

There are many phenomenological schools but not many that are Ricoeurian. One of the few is the Vancouver School of Doing Phenomenology which is popular in the Nordic countries (Dowling & Cooney, 2012).

Dowling, M., & Cooney, A. (2012). Research approaches related to phenomenology: Negotiating a complex landscape. *Nurse Researcher*, 20(2), 21-27.



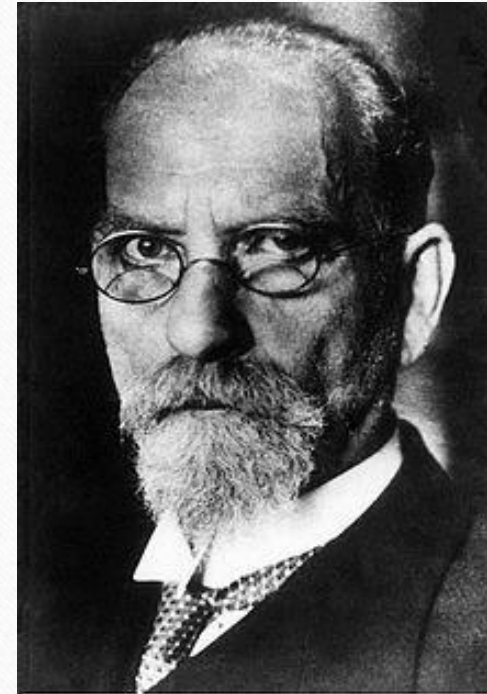
The History of Phenomenology

- It is not an easy task to write the history of phenomenology because it is a movement and is constantly evolving (Spiegelberg, 1984/1965).
- Spiegelberg, H. (1984/1965). *The phenomenological movement: A historical introduction* (3rd ed.). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.



The Founder of Phenomenology

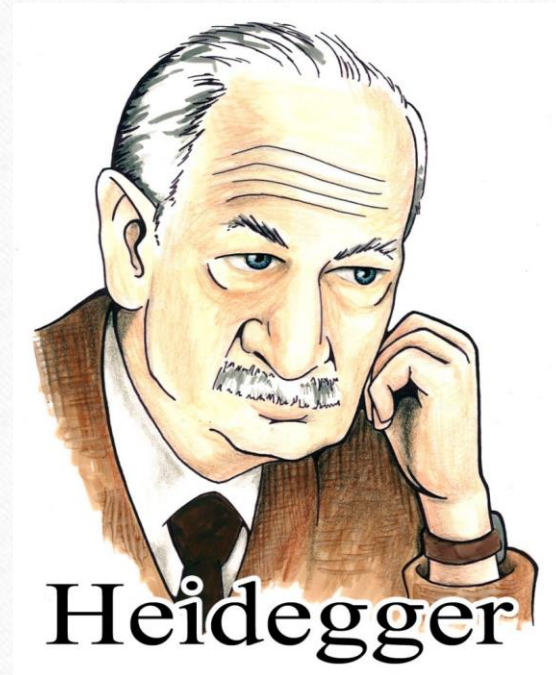
- The founder of phenomenology was Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) who wanted to present a counterweight to unilateral quantitative thinking and methodology.
- He was born in the Czech Republic and was a professor of philosophy at the University of Freiburg in Germany.
- In 1911 came the publication of his "*Philosophy as Rigorous Science*". In later writings, he declares the birth of a new scientific method - phenomenology.



Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

The Main Successor of Husserl

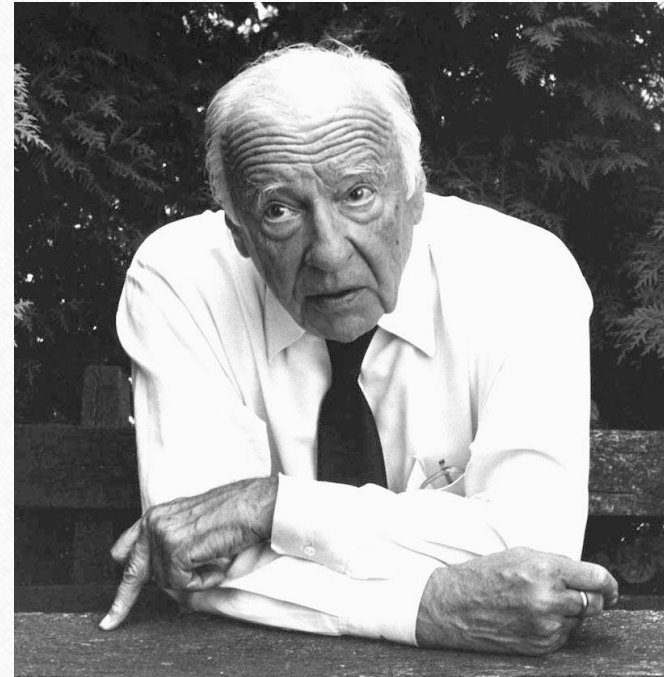
- Born in Germany. Influenced by Husserl, Augustine and Kierkegaard. Wrote his main work "*Being and Time*" in 1927. Was a Professor in Philosophy. Retired in 1959 but continued to write until his death in 1976 in Freiburg.



Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002)

Successor of Heidegger

- A German philosopher of the continental tradition, best known for his great work *Truth and Method (Wahrheit und Methode)* published in 1960.
- Gadamer's goal was to uncover the nature of human understanding. He claimed that people are embedded in the particular history and culture that shaped them which affects their preunderstanding.



Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005)

Successor of Heidegger

- Born in France. Professor of Philosophy at the Universities of Strasbourg and Paris (Sorbonne, Nanterre).
- Considered by Max van Manen the leading phenomenologist. He wrote very much.
- *Main theme*: phenomenology cannot be without hermeneutics and hermeneutics cannot be without phenomenology.



The Basic Understanding of Phenomenology

- Phenomenology is based on the understanding that individuals view the world in their unique ways and their vision is shaped by previous experience and the interpretation of that experience. This vision affects how they experience the world and how they live their lives.



The Main Efforts in the Research Work

- In phenomenology the researcher seeks to understand each participant in the *context* which he or she is in. The focus of the researcher is to create a certain general picture of the experience, in cooperation with each participant, based on how it looks from the perspective of exactly this person.



The Main Efforts in the Research Work cont.

- Then the overall picture of that participant is compared to the overall picture of the next participant and so on until a complete picture of *the phenomenon* has been fully clarified.
- The words of the participants are the building blocks used for this work.



The Research Participants

Seen as Co-Researchers

- In phenomenology each participant is seen as a *co-researcher* who has important information. The participants are looked at with respect, warmth and gentleness and seen as experts in how their experience was.





Adrian van Kaam (1920-2007)

- Adrian van Kaam was the first to develop a clear methodology with a phenomenological approach. He presented the five following steps:

1. Initial examination

Preliminary considerations.

2. Identifying the research question.

Dive into the experience and all its components.

3. Scientific explication. Key aspects in the data are listed and categorized. The researcher tries to remove anything that is unclear and all redundancies are eliminated. Categories are developed based on assumptions of how the phenomenon is composed.

4. Final description of the phenomenon. At this point, the researcher should be able to describe the phenomenon under study and answer the research question or research questions set out in the beginning.



Herbert Spiegelberg (1904-1990)

Spiegelberg (1965/1984) presented six steps of phenomenology common to all schools:

1. **Description of the phenomenon:** Analysis and description of the phenomenon under study, as free of the influence of pre-conceived ideas as possible.
2. **Analysis of the essences of the phenomenon.** The researcher tries to find the core of the phenomenon and how essences of the phenomenon are arranged together.
3. **Apprehending essential relationships among essences.** Trying to distinguish between the elements belonging to the phenomenon and those that do not,

and describing the relationships between the different elements.

4. **Analysis of cognitive processes.** Trying to understand how the phenomenon is “shaped” in the consciousness of the participant.
5. **Preconceived ideas systematically put aside.** While this is being done at baseline is important to do this systematically before the interpretation.
6. **Interpreting the meaning of the phenomenon.** Trying to interpret the meanings associated with the phenomenon which is often covered in the initial examination, analysis and description.



Amedeo Giorgi

Giorgi's method involves obtaining detailed research data with each participant. The sample size is usually four to five. Once the interview process is completed, data analysis is presented in five main steps:

- **1. Get a complete picture of the experience.** The researcher reads the full description of the experience to get a feel for the big picture.
- **2. Analysis of knowledge units.** The researcher reads the interviews again and then much slower and focuses on identifying the knowledge units that together form the overall experience.

3. Cleaning, explanation and condensation. The researcher clears away all the elements that are not directly connected to the phenomenon, begins to realize and understand the experience and connects the knowledge units together.

4. Reflection and transformation. The researcher ponders on the overall description and transforms the description of the phenomenon into scientific terminology.

5. Presentation of the results and presentation. The researcher integrates all units of the phenomenon, develops into a whole the insights he or she has gotten into the phenomenon, writes a description of the phenomenon and presents it for other researchers for confirmation or criticism.

Paul F. Colaizzi (1938-2010)

Colaizzi proposed a phenomenological method in seven main sections:

- **Reading all interviews.** All the transcribed interviews are read over to get a feel for them.
- **Find key phrases and remove others.** Key phrases are taken out of each transcribed interview, focusing on paragraphs and phrases directly related to the phenomenon under study. Phrases that are not connected to the phenomenon are taken out.
- **Finding the meaning of key phrases.** Trying to find the meaning of each key phrase. The meaning must not contradict the context in which the comment was made.
- **Key phrases are organized into one whole.** Themes are put together until they form a whole. This whole is then compared with the original description of the participant to receive confirmation.
- **Preparing the phenomenological descriptions.** When the clusters of themes create a whole a phenomenological description is prepared.
- **Writing the phenomenological description.** Detailed description of the phenomenon is expressed in the phenomenological description that describes the essential structure of the phenomenon.
- **Confirmation.** Confirmation is sought of the participants and they are asked whether the phenomenological description describes their experience.

The Vancouver-School of Doing Phenomenology

- The Vancouver School of doing phenomenology is designed to raise awareness of human phenomena e.g. for the purpose of understanding people and their experience as well as improving human services, e.g. health care or education.
- Influences can be identified from:
 - Anderson – phenomenology
 - Colaizzi and Spiegelberg – phenomenology
 - Ricoeur –interpretive phenomenology
 - Schwandt – constructivism
- **Publication:**

Halldorsdottir, S. (2000). The Vancouver School of Doing Phenomenology. In B. Fridlund and C. Hildingh (Eds.). *Qualitative methods in the service of health* (pp. 47-81). Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- **The chapter can be found here:**
<http://staff.unak.is/not/sigridur/the%20vancouver%20school.pdf>

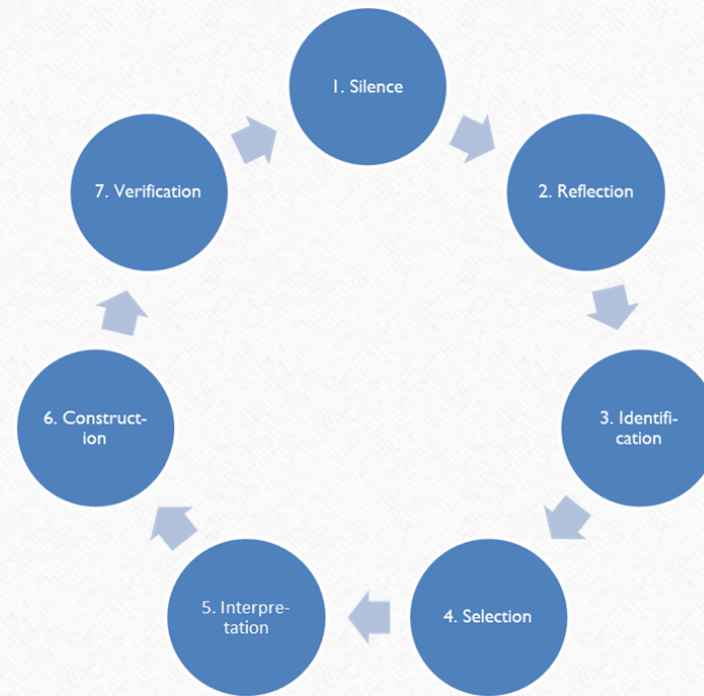
The 12 Basic Steps of the Research Process of the Vancouver School

The Vancouver School of Doing Phenomenology (in short: Vancouver-School) is both student-friendly and user-friendly. It is portrayed as 12 basic steps.

Steps in the research process	What was done in the present study
Step 1. Selecting dialogue partners (<i>the sample</i>).	[<i>Number of participants</i>] were selected through purposive sampling.
Step 2 Silence (<i>before entering a dialogue</i>).	Preconceived ideas were deliberately put aside.
Step 3 Participating in a dialogue (<i>data collection</i>).	[<i>Number of interviews</i>] interviews with each participant, total of [<i>number</i>] interviews. The researcher conducted all the interviews.
Step 4. Sharpened awareness of words (<i>data analysis</i>).	Data collecting and data analysis ran concurrently.
Step 5. Beginning consideration of essences (<i>coding</i>).	Trying repeatedly to answer the question: What is the essence of what this participant is saying?
Step 6. Constructing the essential structure of the phenomenon from each case (<i>construction</i>).	The main factors in each participant's story is highlighted and the most important factors are constructed into an analytic framework.
Step 7. Verifying each case construction with the relevant participant (<i>verification</i>).	This was done with all the participants.
Step 8. Constructing the essential structure of the phenomenon from all the cases (<i>final construction</i>).	The researcher/[All researchers participated in this final data analysis process and] made sure the model and framework constructed were based on the actual data.
Step 9. Comparing the essential structure of the phenomenon with the data (<i>meta-synthesis of all the different case constructions</i>).	To ensure this factor, all the transcripts were read over again.
Step 10. Identifying the overriding theme which describes the phenomenon (<i>construction of the main theme</i>).	[<i>The name of the study</i>].
Step 11. Verifying the essential structure with some research participants (<i>verification</i>).	The results and the conclusions were presented to and verified by all the participants.
Step 12. Writing up the findings (<i>multivoiced reconstruction</i>).	The participants are quoted directly to increase the trustworthiness of the findings and conclusions.

The research process in the Vancouver school of doing phenomenology

- In each step there is a seven stage process: *silence, reflection, identification, selection, interpretation, construction and verification*.
- Modified figure from Halldorsdottir, S. (2000) p. 56. This cycle is repeated in every of the 12 steps of the Vancouver School.



The Vancouver School: Steps 1-3

Steps in the Research Process

Step 1. Selecting dialogue partners (*the sample*).

Step 2 Silence (*before entering a dialogue*).

Step 3 Participating in a dialogue (*data collection*).

What is Done

- Participants are selected through purposive sampling.
- Preconceived ideas are deliberately put aside.
- One to three with each participant, generally about 15 interviews.

The Vancouver School: Steps 4-6

Steps in the Research Process

- **Step 4.** Sharpened awareness of words (*data analysis*).
- **Step 5.** Beginning consideration of essences (*coding*).
- **Step 6.** Constructing the essential structure of the phenomenon from each case (*construction*).

What was done in the Present Study

- Data collecting and data analysis run concurrently.
- Trying repeatedly to answer the question: What is the essence of what this participant is saying?
- The main factors in each participant's story is highlighted and the most important factors are constructed into an **individual analytic framework in the form of a figure or a table.**

The Vancouver School: Steps 7-9

Steps in the Research Process

- **Step 7.** Verifying each case construction with the relevant participant (*verification*).
- **Step 8.** Constructing the essential structure of the phenomenon from all the cases (*final construction*).
- **Step 9.** Comparing the essential structure of the phenomenon with the data (*meta-synthesis of all the different case constructions*).

What is Done

- **This is done with *all* the participants.**
- The researcher makes sure the model and framework constructed are based on the actual data.
- **To ensure this factor, all the transcripts are read again.**

The Vancouver School: Steps 10-12

Steps of the Research Process

- **Step 10.** Identifying the overriding theme which describes the phenomenon (*construction of the main theme*).
- **Step 11.** Verifying the essential structure with some research participants (*verification*).
- **Step 12.** Writing up the findings (*multivoiced reconstruction*).

What is done

- *The main theme and thus the name of the study is constructed.*
- The results and the conclusions are presented to and verified by some of the participants.
- The participants are quoted directly to increase the trustworthiness of the findings and conclusions.

Triangulation of Researchers

Research Co-operation

- The research process in the Vancouver-School study makes cooperation much easier than in many other research methodologies, because each researcher can go through steps 1-7 and then researchers can work together from step 8 to 12.



Thank you!

There really is ice in Iceland 😊



..and plenty of water - Gullfoss



The Land of Fire and Ice 😊

Fire in Iceland



Ice in Iceland

