

Method or Madness: Transcendental Phenomenology as Knowledge Creator

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Abstract

This paper reviews the research method of transcendental phenomenology and the steps in application to human experience. This is conceptualized in the context of a study performed with a number of participants and their experience of finding their “calling”. Their experiences are used as the medium through which Husserl’s method is explored. Commentary on the experience of conducting the study is included with attending questions and concerns about this radical approach to creating and understanding new social knowledge. The researcher’s integrity in application of some of the phenomenological constructs is also explored.

Introduction

In the quest to discover and create new social knowledge, there are numerous ways we might gather, manage and analyze data to develop a literary presentation of human experience. Among the qualitative methods are transcendental phenomenology championed by the philosopher Edmund Husserl (1913/1931), which has its interpretation in practice where it aims to get at the things themselves through creating written descriptions of personal experience as the source of all claims to knowledge; symbolic interactionism, set out by Mead with articulated application by Blumer (1969), who claims that meaning is a function of the way a person construes the environment as a result of interaction with it; ethnography, which attempts to describe a group or culture (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Fetterman, 1989); participant observation which is considered a special form of ethnography that strives to gain a perspective from the inside of a group by experiencing the phenomena first hand; grounded theory which utilizes an inductive

process to develop abstract concepts and propositions about the relationships between various categories of the data that reflect the phenomena (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Strauss, 1987); dramaturgical interviewing, most strongly associated with Goffman (1959), who held that people engage in impression management as they present themselves in social encounter; and content analysis which utilizes and applies concepts or categories to the data, and which are determined prior to data collection. This may include analysis of the number of words expressing affect, thought, imagery, sensation, frequency or duration of events and focuses more on the manifest meaning that is contained in the data (Ericsson & Simon, 1985). Regardless of the qualitative method employed, its application is rigorous. As Bogdan and Biklen state:

Qualitative studies are not impressionistic essays made after a quick visit to a setting or after some conversations with a few subjects. The researcher spends considerable time in the empirical world laboriously collecting and reviewing piles of data. The data must bear the weight of any interpretation, so the researcher must constantly confront his or her own opinions and prejudices with the data. (1982, p. 42)

Even stronger support of the qualitative approach comes from Goetz and LeCompte, (1984), and Morgan, (1986) who consider qualitative methods to be superior to other research methods for achieving in-depth understanding of complex processes or phenomena. Since the objective of this form of research is understanding rather than generalization from cause to effect, the qualitative researcher seeks to understand the ways in which the participants in the study make meaning of their experiences and behaviors (Schein, 1985).

With so many options available to the aspiring researcher, one is left with the question of which method will best lend itself to capturing the richest data relevant to the inquiry? An answer to this is that it depends on what the researcher is after. What are we attempting to discover? Answering this question will intuitively lead us to the best approach for gathering data that will most effectively describe the phenomenon at hand. And, as qualitative research tends toward discovery, not replication or verification, that method which provides the most complete picture of the phenomenon, yielding the greatest increase in understanding is the one to choose.

The study, conducted by this author and referred to in this paper, is one that pursued knowledge of the experience of discovering a calling. This experience is often very personal, and discovering its details and nuances would be poorly served by many of the methods reviewed above. However, transcendental phenomenology, with its emphasis on ‘getting to the things themselves’, appears to be the best means by which a researcher might apprehend these nuances and variations in experience across individuals.

Transcendental phenomenology aspires to access the personal, the individual, the variations within themes. It is, inherently, a means of creating knowledge that is particular; knowledge that offers a portal of insight into the individual and idiosyncratic. If we truly want to understand an other and if we are genuinely interested in “helping” as so many professions claim to be, then we can scarcely overlook the process of phenomenology in our pursuit. From counselors to managers, from professors to physicians, who would not benefit from greater knowledge of the experiences of those they serve? In this interest then, this method has broad application to many professional

and personal relations. It has the potential to reveal new facets of those we serve and who serve us, while ultimately contributing to potentially greater productivity and happiness.

In the area of calling or finding one's passion, it makes perfect sense to assist others in their discovery of that work which is theirs. This is especially true in the current age where there are a multitude of options for our career track and where discovering/selecting the right one has become so much more complex than it might have been decades ago. Thanks to increases in technology and the complexity of our world, the options from which one may choose their path seems to grow exponentially, almost daily. How does one sort that mass of information and whittle it down to a manageable collection of options, and thereby avoid the paralysis that may ensue from unlimited possibility? This researcher believes that the ideas contained in transcendental phenomenology avail themselves to such discovery through dialogue with a concerned and committed other. Hence, it is in our interest to understand this method of dialogue as we endeavor to contribute to the health and commitments of those with whom we are in relationship.

The fundamental questions that drive this paper are; what is transcendental phenomenology, and what is its contribution to creating greater and better social knowledge? Answering these questions requires an understanding of the process and will be explicated here through a review of its use in understanding the experience of discovering and following one's calling. Using this experience to explicate the method will situate it more concretely than would a sterile presentation of method, detached from a particular inquiry.

Theoretical Roots

As Bogart (1992) has shown, discovery is often experienced as a narrative theme in one's life and may be discovered only in retrospect. Phenomenology is retrospective in nature and is based on the work of Hegel and Husserl.

Hegel formulated phenomenology as the science in which we come to know mind as it is in itself through the study of the ways in which it appears to us. However, with Husserl phenomenology became a descriptive method as well as a human science movement based on modes of reflection at the heart of philosophic and human science thought. (van Manen, 1990, pp. 183-184)

Van Manen supports this reflective component of the method and makes this clear when he states:

The phenomenological reflection is not introspection but rather retrospective. Reflection on lived experience is always recollective; it is a reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through. (1990, p. 10)

It is through this reflection that we make meaning of the things themselves in our lives.

Frankl captures the idea of meaning construction through phenomenology in the following quote:

Phenomenology is an attempt to describe the way in which man understands himself, in which he interprets his own existence, far from preconceived patterns of interpretation and explanation such as are furnished by psychodynamic or socio-economic hypotheses. (1988, p. 7)

Research in this genre of understanding then, focuses on the participants' experience and meaning making as experienced by them, not on keen descriptions of overt actions or behavior by the researcher. Meaning making takes place at the intersection of the physical world in which experience transpires, and the mental and emotional world of the participant. This person-world intersect is where greatest understanding can materialize

and phenomenology seems to best lend itself to this discovery. A detailed review of some of the central components of the idea and its application will provide solid grounding for interpretation of its use.

Noesis and Noema

Husserl's (1931) discussion of the main components of transcendental phenomenology includes intentionality which consists of the noesis and noema. The noesis is composed of mind and spirit and aids in providing meaning to whatever presents itself to "perception, memory, judgment, thinking and feeling" (p. 249). This is contained in the psychic dimension and does not include sensory or physical referents. Husserl considered the noesis to contain meanings that are concealed and hidden from direct awareness. These meanings must be drawn out in the practice of phenomenological research.

Noema is the other main component of intentionality and it corresponds directly with the noesis. Ihde makes the difference clear where he states:

noema is *that* which is experienced, the what of experience, the object-correlate. Noesis is the way in which the what is experienced, the experiencing or act of experiencing, the subject-correlate. (1977, p. 43)

The noema, or what is considered the real, physical object of our awareness draws our attention in a prereflective manner. It is this awareness that we can describe over and over again with each additional examination. Each successive observation will be embellished by the acts of memory and imagination. The materiality of the thing witnessed will undergo "'formal shapings' and 'gifts of meaning,' which we grasp, in reflexion, upon and with the material elements" (Husserl, 1931, p. 284). The transformation of the thing takes

place within the noetic phases where the cyclical, recursive circle gets traveled round and round in the never-ending rhythm that results in deeper, more three dimensional images of a phenomenon, arriving, ultimately, at its essence. Phenomenology involves a continuous cycle of perception, and reflection on the experience where new understandings of the phenomenon under investigation emerge with each additional exposure. With each, more articulated revision of the description of the phenomenon, the researcher captures greater detail in the noematic qualities, and this “always relates to a subjective consciousness, the noesis” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 73). Phenomenological essence emerges at the nexus of the noema and noesis. At this point of unity comes a harmonious and integrated understanding of the experience.

In the study under review here, the noema can be understood to be the experience, as told in reflection by the participants, of finding and following their calling. That is the ‘matter’ of the study. The noesis, however, is the turning of the participants’ interpretation of their experience as captured in their telling, and the reception of that experience in the meaning making apparatus of the researcher. How the stories are apprehended and understood in the perceptual, conceptual and interpretive analysis corresponds to the noetic.

Epoche

In an attempt to capture the essence of human experience, it is incumbent on the researcher to put in abeyance presuppositions and prejudices she may carry with her into the field. These psychic predispositions may be known or unknown by the researcher, however, it is necessary that, through reflection, they be put away or set aside. This

exercise in suspension and perceptual freedom is called the Epoche, “a Greek word which means to stay away from or abstain” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). As Husserl makes exquisitely clear in the following passages:

The epoche can also be said to be the radical and universal method by which I apprehend myself purely: as Ego with my own pure conscious life, in and by which the entire Objective world exists for me and is precisely as it is for me. (1977, p. 20-21)

Epoche creates a unique sort of philosophical solitude, which is the fundamental methodical requirement for a truly radical philosophy...it is I who practice the epoche, I who interrogate, as phenomenon, the world which is now valid for me according to its being and being-such. (1970, p. 184)

Moustakas intends the epoche as that stage in the research where the interviews take place. Once one has engaged the epoche, she is prepared to focus her perceptual lens on that phenomenon which lies within the bracket. Only knowledge that arrives through reflection and intuition is allowed. Cartesian, scientific ‘truth’ is external to, and disallowed in the epoche. This frame of perception and psychological situatedness allows the world to be experienced anew, to be seen again for the first time. Kellenberger, (1995), describes the idea of realization-discoveries where the inherent, but often unseen significance of the familiar is suddenly realized. These discoveries happen when “a kind of blindness is lifted and we see the significance of facts that have long been familiar to us. They are not a matter of gathering new facts; they are a matter of seeing the significance of old facts...they are a matter of seeing the significance of the already-familiar as evidence” (p. 58). Adopting this perceptual stance establishes one with new eyes and virgin consciousness, and renders one available to whatever shows up. It is a way of being, characterized by openness and receptivity to what is in the world, free of judgment

and evaluation. Keen pierces the essence of this perceptual stance in his reflections on contemplation.

In contemplation one returns to an object that was given in wonder in order to prolong admiration and appreciation: a favorite stretch of beach, a painting which has already given hours of enjoyment, the face of one long loved, a familiar tree and so on (1973, p. 35).

He calls this stance one of “receptive passivity” and elaborates on this by saying that it is the “calm and disciplined effort of thought to be open to the uniqueness and novelty of its object” (p. 34). Similar to the idea of unconditional positive regard proposed by Carl Rogers (1961), one is available to receive the world in its own form, on its own conditions, liberated from the burden of deciding or discerning, only accepting. What is, is just what is, and the observer is on the scene to experience just that. The epoche creates a clearing in the researcher and the world for the phenomenon to show up, possibly different than usual. The epoche has to do with the constitution of the researcher, how she situates herself in relation to the phenomenon. Bracketing, reviewed next, focuses more on the phenomenon at hand and how the researcher relates to it.

Bracketing

The process of bracketing separates the world of experience and establishes freedom from ordinary thought. This is where the phenomenon is available to be present before us as a “phenomenon...known naively and freshly through a ‘purified’ consciousness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). In this stage, the researcher has uncluttered the domain of inquiry and attempted to create an experiential clearing where the phenomenon under investigation is uncontaminated by external conceptions and history. The

phenomenon lies within the bracket. Bracketing contributes to the transformation from the natural attitude, or “the biases of everyday knowledge” (p.85) which equates to our common knowledge or way of interacting and apprehending the world, to that of the transcendental attitude. This is referred to as the “reduction” where one literally reduces the world as it is considered in the natural attitude to the world of pure phenomena. The researcher doubts the “natural attitude”.

In the application of the bracketing process the researcher attempts to see the “Lebenswelt”, as Husserl (Carr, 1977) refers to it, of the participants with new and fresh eyes so that she might gather it in its original state. The “Lebenswelt” is the world as lived by the person and not the hypothetical external entity that is considered separate or independent from him as seen through the eyes of the scientific community (Husserl, 1970). There is no speculation about causes or what is behind the life-world. It is the world of prereflective experience free of the natural attitude which, as referred to above, claims that the interrelationships and functions of objects in the world operate on certain discovered or soon-to-be-discovered laws. In the phenomenological approach we strive to rid ourselves of the assumption that what we experience is simply a direct reflection of what is “out there.” Instead, the assumption is that “what is out there” is really a function of what we experience. Experience is the final arbiter of what is real, not the supposed hard, objective, physical world. Rogers concurs in his book *On Becoming a Person* when he says “experience for me is the highest authority” (1961, p. 23).

In the apprehension of the phenomenon within brackets, the researcher must engage the epoche and “shut...out our preconceived biases and judgments, setting aside

voices, sounds and silences that so readily tell us what something is” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 60). We are now “looking before judging, and clearing a space within ourselves so that we can actually see what is before us and in us” (p. 60). It is here that we attempt to clear our own consciousnesses, retreat and listen to our inner voice, attend to our biases and those prejudgments that accompany us, parasitically through our life and which influence each next perception. Relying on our intuition, what we know to be true in our heart of hearts, our challenge is to attend to that which presents itself to our senses. This act is made all the more difficult by our socialization to believe what we are told by others about what they think, feel, and know, and how that is delivered to us as what is ‘true’.

Nature of the Study

The study referred to in this paper, which is intended to flesh out the method of transcendental phenomenology, explored the experience of discovering one’s calling and the subsequent experience of following it. Nine participants took part in this study and all of them were engaged in occupations that focused on the natural environment. These occupations ranged from nature writer, to park ranger, to environmental architect, to urban planner, to volunteer and they were discovered through a snowball sampling procedure (Bailey, 1994, p. 96). At the end of each interview, when the participant had a better grasp of the content and feel of the conversation and where it might lead, each was asked who occurred to them that might also be interested in this stream of dialogue. This final question yielded a sizable list of potential candidates. Follow up phone calls to those

referred provided some measure of who might be interested, and in-person conversations were then scheduled to determine who felt as if they might be experiencing their calling. Those who felt that may be the case were then asked if they would be interested in taking part in the study and making themselves available for further interviewing and dialogue. Interviews were conducted in an effort to gather rich descriptions and stories of the participants' experiences as they reflected on their career journey. These conversations were audio taped, transcribed and analyzed using the process of transcendental phenomenology which will be described later in this paper. Segments of various descriptions called for by the method will be included as examples of the 'products' that are produced through the use of this rich and personal approach to knowledge.

Method - Overview

Through the analysis of interviews the researcher attempts to discover the structures, logic, and interrelationships that are contained in the phenomenon under investigation. The analysis facilitates the transfer of naïve descriptions of experience into a description of the essential textural features of that individual experience. The researcher must decipher the essential description of the contents and the particular underlying structure that relates the elements into a unified experiential whole. The end result of phenomenological research is a description of the essential structure of the experience reflecting the core elements shared by the participants. This essential structure is made up of the elements or constituents that present an experience as what it is. It contains those items that account for this experience. These are structural elements without which the experience would be named something wholly different. This description is called the

“general structural description” (Husserl, 1913/1931). The purpose is to arrive at a nonreductive structure that unites the invariant elements of an experience into a whole. Van Kaam (1969) calls this process explication. Through the process of explication, implicit awareness becomes explicit. (Please see Appendix A for step by step details of this method) The foundational steps in application follow the general form described below. Excerpts of descriptions and the author’s experience in applying the method will be included as a means of concretizing the abstract.

The Application of Transcendental Phenomenology

This section of the paper will provide detailed explanations of the steps employed in transcendental phenomenology, with accompanying illustrations of the products generated at each stage.

Phenomenological Reduction

Achieving the state of epoche where the phenomenon is available, free of the tacit lenses that encumber daily life, is an admirable challenge and one worthy of significant effort and consideration. In my own efforts to accomplish this state of consciousness I encountered much doubt and hope. I reflected on Beech’s (1999) notion of entering the ‘life-world’ of the research participant while trying to remain as free as possible from preconceptions about the phenomenon, all the while making my own preconceptions apparent and public for analysis. This helped set aside my presuppositions as I entered the conversations, and then again as I encountered the transcripts of the interviews. Through this process I attempted to make present my assumptions about the experience under investigation, shed common interpretations of discovering a calling as something

that arrives with thunder and a shudder, and make myself available for the possibility that there may indeed be no such thing as a calling. Maybe this is just an antiquated notion that gains purchase in our consciousness through story and myth, historically situated in religio/literary themes not wholly divorced from the idea of archetype. In considering radical and not so radical ideas about calling, and hearing the stories of the participants through new ears and seeing them through new eyes, I hoped to make myself available to new consciousness by availing myself of psychic freedom, or at least approximations of this freedom through thought and reflection. Some level of peace and the freedom to move forward is gained from a review of Ashworth's (1987) pragmatic approach to managing the tension between achieving minimal bias while still giving a nod to the multi-vocal reality in which we all swim. Here the researcher acknowledges that many voices, ideas and interpretations comprise the various realities within which human system research takes place.

Regardless of the researcher's success, there remain numerous hurdles that must be surmounted to complete the phenomenological gaze effectively. Phenomenological reduction follows the epoche and involves capturing the constituents of the moment experienced within brackets in "its singularity, in and for itself" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). This includes apprehending the textural qualities of the phenomenon. These include visual, auditory, tactile and olfactory sensations that inform the experiential gestalt. Also included are the meanings of the experience, the awareness of consciousness of having the experience, space/time references, and qualities that emerge from these dimensions that may otherwise be glossed over in the sensory flood of everyday life. The task is to

describe just what one sees in language that accesses the object under investigation, and how the object is captured in the consciousness of the observer. The relationship between the object and the observer, the objective and the subjective, is critical in collecting a particular instance of the phenomenon. The process of placing the phenomenon in a field of its own as a means of seeing it again for the first time removes everything else so that the research can focus solely on the phenomenon at hand.

Horizons

The concept of horizons intends continuous, new and fresh perspectives of a phenomenon, with each successive perception. There are unlimited potential horizons of the moment which approaches saturation through the act of writing the description of the phenomenon in the words of the participants. While never exhausting the potential horizons with which the experience may be endowed, each fresh perspective yields greater depth and fullness of the experience and provides the textural material from which the description is created.

Horizons of the experience of discovering one's calling include:

“you feel you are a bit player in a much larger drama. You don't know the script, you don't know the director, you can imagine that it is a great power, that it has a terrific sense of humor.”

“I am more keenly aware of my impact on the rest of the world through the work I am doing.”

“I like walking around in natural systems.”

“Well in a way and I had a very intense religious experience that I haven't shared with anybody and I don't think I want to because I think it would dilute it. But it changed me. It was a kind of, well, it was not kind of, it was a great moment of insight that I didn't seek but just came and I've been different ever since. It was

overwhelming emotionally, and scary as all get out. It was kind of like one minute I had no knowledge and the next minute I did. Having not gone through any thought process at all, it was just like being struck.”

“I see my role here as my life so I struggle with trying to come up with my personal role vs. my professional role and I guess they really are one and the same because I really do believe in what I do here. And I’m excited about what I do and I look forward to coming to work everyday and that wasn’t always the case.”

“It was really kind of an evolutionary process. It’s just one of those feelings of doing what’s right.”

“you’re sense of commitment has to be bigger than your ego. You got to be strong enough in your commitment and your self-assurance to do battle”

These perpetual, multi-faceted exposures to the phenomenon are what contribute to the thickness and visceral quality of the description. With each successive view or angle of perception, one acquires greater knowledge of the phenomenon and a deeper understanding of its distinctive character. Once the researcher is satisfied that they have accessed the core essence of the phenomenon, the statements, or horizons that represent those perspectives are reviewed with an eye to what is central or thematic to the experience. In this process called “horizontalizing” (Moustakas, 1994), statements that are irrelevant, or overlapping and repetitive are removed, leaving only those that seize the invariant constituents of the phenomenon. This process is accomplished by analyzing the language used by the participants that describes their experience, and excluding those comments within and across interviews that access similar essences. The invariant core constituents of the phenomenon are clustered into themes that represent the various dimensions of the phenomenon and it is these which facilitate the development of the

textural description. The following are representative of the themes which emerged from an analysis of the horizontal statements of all interviews:

- The gradual emergence and development of an interest in nature
- Some element of serendipity or synchronicity of events and relationships
- Development of new perspectives and dimensions of self and world
- Integration of life, self, work, spirit and world

Textural Description

In writing the individual textural description, the researcher returns to the horizontal statements “in a state of openness and freedom, [which] facilitates clear seeing, makes possible identity, and encourages the looking again and again that leads to deeper layers of meaning” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 96). Here, she knits together the various thematic horizons of the experience that have emerged from returning to the thing itself, into a description that represents the integration of the participant’s experience and the conscious experience of the researcher. An excerpt from a textural description will aid in illustrating this step.

In reflecting on how he has discovered and followed his calling, Don retreats to his childhood. He refers to his natural interest in that he “always loved being outdoors and [that he has] fond memories of our parents taking us to the state parks and some of my clearest memories as a kid are being in the parks hiking with my parents.” He also recalls “taking friends, girlfriends out to the parks, you know, for hiking.” His natural interest emerges at other times in the interview when he speaks of his fascination “when you stumble on an historic site or a pre-historic site that nobody knew was there, to me that is absolutely fascinating.”

These experiences were augmented through Don’s work in college. Originally a building architecture student, he took a workshop on landscape architecture and discovered a passion for this field. It “was more of an environmental science and the 70s it was very much the thing to do” and “I

enjoyed it the more I got into it.” “Planning regional parks, national parks, a million acres at a time or site analysis for a whole city or county or hundreds of square miles to try to determine growth patterns and those things seemed kind of interesting to me.” From these experiences, Don decided to change his focus from “building architecture to landscape architecture” and he realized that he had an “interest in doing something that involved working with the environment, at least working with the land. It didn’t materialize until I came here and worked with something that is more pristine or pure.”

He relates feelings about self and spirit to the larger context of society in his belief that his mission is to “preserve as much natural space as possible and enhance it. Part of our role is to create a way to get people into that space...and preserve as much of that as possible for future generations.” He summarizes this facet of his experience by saying that “I do something that I believe in and that most people believe in too.”

Finally, Don coalesces his experience of following his passion as a sense of integrity. He claims that “there’s a greater sense of integration. Values espoused and values I live by.” He has difficulty discerning between his work life and his life outside the boundaries of his work. “I see my role here as my life so I struggle with trying to come up with my personal role vs. my professional role and I guess they really are one and the same because I really do believe in what I do here. And I’m excited about what I do and I look forward to coming to work everyday and that wasn’t always the case.”

Remaining bracketed while writing the description is essential to apprehend the qualities of the experience as that participant experienced it.

Composite Textural Description

The last step in the phenomenological reduction is the creation of the composite textural description. This represents the constituents that reflect the most core elements contained in the experience under investigation. This is not a listing of all constituents that have been identified for all participants, but instead the central and most thematic constituents that run across all participants, or what are universal for them.

The following quote is an excerpt of the composite textural description of the participants’ experience of discovering their calling in service to natural preservation.

The co-researchers in this study claim an early exposure to the world of nature, often at the hands of their families, and most credit their parents with this introduction and are grateful for the seeds these experiences planted. Growing up in rural areas or just being taken out to parks for hikes and camping are common themes that elicited feelings of awe and wonder for the natural world. While unknown at the time, these were the beginning buds of what would become a career in this work. The discovery for most was a gradual, evolutionary one that emerged through the little decisions made daily, that, over time, contribute to the creation of a career and a discernible path. Rarely was there some grand career objective or plan that the participants adhered to. Instead, they seemed to let their curiosity be their guide. This often resulted in serendipitous events like the development of a new position in an organization, that was perfect for the particular co-researcher; attending a workshop that results in a change in direction for one's study; chance encounters or conversations that lead to opportunities to apply one's craft.

In writing the composite textural description many of the identified contributors to their experience are knitted together to reflect the central themes that apply to the co-researchers. This is not an exhaustive collection of their comments, but a description that captures the core, most often cited events and ideas that have contributed to their emergent path.

Imaginative Variation

Once the individual and composite textural descriptions have been completed, the next step is to engage in imaginative variation as a means of arriving at “the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). Here the researcher varies the possible meanings of the statements of the experience through the use of imagination and free association. Reliance on intuition and open receptivity to whatever may show up on the scene is at the heart of this practice. It can be likened to brainstorming where there are no bad ideas and anything that comes to consciousness is considered viable. Perspectives of the phenomenon are considered from

different vantage points and meanings in an effort to discern the structural elements, or dynamics that have given rise to the textural qualities. This includes “varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions” (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 97-98). As reported in the section on phenomenological reduction, I again engaged with various frames of mind and focused my thoughts and reflections on the experience of the interview as I reviewed transcripts and attempted to think broadly, laterally as DeBono (1970) has suggested. What might account for their experience? What must be present for an experience like this to take place? My challenge was to discover the “how” of this experience. How is it that this experience is? What are the elements that have provided the conditions for this experience to emerge? The end goal of this step is to arrive at the structural elements that have given rise to the experience being what it is. In application, this process involves both the data and the consciousness of the researcher. In Moustakas’s words we must “Consider...the universal structures that precipitate feelings and thought with reference to the phenomenon, such as the structure of time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, causality, relation to self, or relation to others” (p. 99) as avenues of access to the invariant structural themes. Imaginative variation penetrates the underlying dynamics of the experience and identifies those qualities that help us understand how the experience is experienced by the co-inquirer.

Structural Description

The next step in Imaginative Variation is the recursive process of identifying the themes within each participant, and the invariant structures from the participants’

transcripts that exemplify these structural themes. This step takes us back to the “data” in a way that completes the circle of inquiry. Having moved up and away from the raw information of the interviews and the horizons, the researcher now has the opportunity to return to that moist and fertile loam which bore the rich nubile buds of discovery. These contribute to the development of a structural description of the phenomenon for each participant. This description emerges from an understanding and appreciation of the identified structural themes of the experience, which are the bedrock upon which the textural qualities rest. Without these structural constituents, the experience would be something altogether different than the identified phenomenon under investigation. In this stage of the analysis, one moves away from the manifest facts and on toward meanings and essences. Structural descriptions are written for each of the co-inquirers and access the underlying factors that account for what each has experienced. The question we seek to answer in this step is “How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is” (p. 98)? An example of an individual structural description follows.

Structural elements that account for how Carrie came to have the experience she has begin with a consideration of time. The beginning stages of this interest were planted early in life and the stage was set for its development and emergence later in life. Her youth and now the youth of others are intimately intertwined in a helical waltz between her own ‘past’ and the ‘present’ of others presenting an element of longitudinality to her passion for nature. Her memories of her childhood are bound up with the experiences of children that she now has contact with in her work. The wonder and awe that she witnesses in their experience seems to reflect that which she herself experienced in her youth and which still informs her work today.

With age and education came the development of her intellectual awareness and a larger ontological perspective of her relationship with the cosmos. This is another facet of the longitudinal element that pervades her perspective of her self in relation to the cosmos. A feeling of smallness coupled with responsibility to the Earth fuels her work.

Living integration of awareness, intellectual understanding, and passion compel her to engage in the work almost as if she has no choice. She can hardly imagine alternative activity and the marriage of knowledge and passion drives her actions.

Her experience of her calling seeps into the very fabric of her life. There is no clear delineation between what she does and who she is. She seems to live her calling. It is inseparable from her as a person and impacts all aspects of her life. The experience of following her calling is almost thrust upon her from her spiritual and philosophical attachment to the solution she is trying to implement. In her words, “it’s a matter of being true to what you know is true.” There is the feeling that “I am doing the right thing”. Her experience has generated a high level of congruence between thoughts, beliefs and actions.

Composite Structural Description

Once structural descriptions have been written for all participants, a composite of these descriptions, similar to that created for the textural descriptions is written. Like the individual textural descriptions, these individual structural descriptions are woven into a composite structural description that represents the timeless structures that inhere in the experience for these co-inquirers. In like manner, this is not a simple inventory of those structures that were discovered in each individual structural description. Instead, this represents the core, most fundamental and essential structures that have explanatory power for what has been experienced. These themes coalesce the textural themes into more concentrated sets of themes that represent the universal structures that inhere in the comments. These are the structures, without which this experience would not have been. Completion of this step results in the creation of two final composite statements. One is the composite textural description and the other is the composite structural description. These composite themes include:

- Nature

- Career development
- Society/others
- Changes in self
- Wholeness/integration
- The urgent imperative

An excerpt from the composite structural description is provided below.

Discovering and following a calling has core themes of youth, time, gradual emergence, duty or responsibility, life congruence, altered perspectives of self in relation to the world, and integrity of self, society and spirit life. The result of following a calling is often a sense of peace and wholeness that comes from an inner knowledge of doing the right thing.

Discovering a passion for nature is an emergent process and usually begins early in life. Often it is at the hands of others, mostly parents who introduce the child to this fascinating arena of life. The relationships that dwell among families provide a safe, trusting embrace for this inauguration into the wild and wooly world of the woods. These first meetings are characterized as ‘cool’, awe inspiring and fun and establish the memory traces necessary for the bloom of passion to take root and flourish later in life. With time, the love of nature finds greater meaning in academic work, and personal growth and development. Decisions are made in the midst of circumstances and encounters with others and ideas, that lead further down the road to commitment to this work. These are rarely if ever the result of great design and planning, but instead, in-the-moment actions that knit, in the aggregate, a tapestry of experience, life, relationships, and perspectives that craft what suddenly, and often retrospectively looks like a career, one which began its formation in the early moments of our awareness. Calling to work in nature is an evolutionary process, one that reflects the very content of its fascination; slow growth over many years until one is struck with the magnificence of what time and love have created.

With the passing of time, one is pleasantly surprised with the sense that one is living an integrated life. Feelings of contribution to society, doing the right thing, fulfilling one’s obligation to a higher power and the earth, and a general sense of congruence emerge. The commitment to the work is almost experienced not as choice but as responsibility and obligation. To deny the call would create dissonance within the person between what one knows to be true and what one is actually engaged in. Hence, while responding to the call is a choiceful act, it is within the context of a larger system, that at some level constricts the choices one can opt for and still live comfortably within one’s own skin. Choosing to follow

the call sets energy in motion that forms one's life into an integrated and seamless whole where it becomes more difficult to discern work life from non work life. It is not that all life becomes work life, but that the driving values that called one to the work now pervade one's whole life. One is a living testament to what it is to live a calling. Definition of self becomes blurred. A diminishing of what is considered the traditional self takes place with the concomitant expansion of a newly defined self that incorporates the universe.

Humility accompanies this shift in perspective and seems necessary to undertake the massive endeavor that this work requires. Care of the self is expanded to incorporate care of others and the world at large, as the world becomes an integrated part of what is considered the self. As the old sense of self grows smaller, the world grows bigger, and results in an enlarged perspective of self in relation to the world. To be clear, the self is not large but the context within which the idea of self is situated expands. This context is large in that the work becomes increasingly important and the self becomes less important, or important only to the extent that the world is also cared for. It is this smallness that allows one to begin considering the possibility of taking on such a seemingly insurmountable task as care of the world. Only through humility can one consider undertaking something so monumental. Any grand ideas of completing the project within one's own short life span are quickly dashed and the overwhelming impossibility of such a task immediately renders one powerless at best, immobilized at worst. Hence, humility is a necessary, but insufficient component for the will of the actor. An appreciation of a world context balances the ego driven nature of humans, creating a more whole perspective of humanities place in relation to the cosmos.

This description coalesces many of the fundamental structural themes, much like the composite textural description, however, this description accesses the experience from a more fundamental approach. It endeavors to apprehend those elements which are foundational to the experience. These are the hospitable conditions that create fertile ground from which the experience may emerge.

Synthesis

The final step in the analysis involves creating an integrated description of the experiences, meanings and essences. This step synthesizes the composite textural and composite structural descriptions and produces one final statement that captures and

expresses the fundamental essence of the experience. It should reflect the experience of all of the participants and can be viewed as the foundational expression of what is timeless in the experience under investigation. This is the essence, without which, the experience would cease to fall within the category described by the given appellation.

The composite themes are used in crafting the synthesis of the composite textural and composite structural descriptions into one final description that responds to all of the themes. Here the researcher cycles back and forth, to and fro between the two composite descriptions and gently finds the common threads that are then woven into one final document that captures the soul and the spirit of the experience. The real, felt and experienced actions align with the high, airy and abstract interpretation as they join together in a helical whirl, co-creating the pure form. In this step it is important to knit the textural themes in with the structural themes as a means of illustrating in the concrete, what has now become a fairly abstract interpretation of the experience. Grounding the composite themes by uniting them with statements taken from the composite textural description aids in completing the circle and anchoring the final description.

Again, an excerpt from this description may aid in illuminating this process.

Great concern for something beyond one's own self interest is the theme that emerges. The participants have shed the typical notion that 'you gotta look out for number one' and have yielded to the more attractive and yet seemingly paradoxical idea that by looking out for others, or something outside the limits of their own immediate domain of concern, they are actually caring for themselves. This is their new self that will be discussed in the next theme, Here, however, their concern has expanded, not for personal interests but for the common interest we all share for our desire and fundamental need for a healthy planet. Their concern goes beyond their lifetime and is reminiscent of the native American notion of considering decisions and actions for seven generations into the future. What is the impact of our work in terms of that timeline and how does that change what we

might consider as the right decision? The phenomenon of calling brings new perspectives about what matters. Priorities change, new ideas emerge and what once was taken as the 'real' world becomes just another possible world creating a great deal of new energy and curiosity for potential social change. "It's what you can do to fulfill your part in trying to establish some kind of stability or some kind of consciousness with what we are doing with this land and how we relate to the other species that are here. It's a big deal."

Relationships with others who are similar and living in an enlarged world view bring new hope and faith and create a healthy support system for the continued effort for one's passion in the face of seeming insurmountable odds. As Bill has mentioned, "the personal relationships with people who are creative thinkers, innovative, who are committed and dedicated...to actually see someone who really embodies those ideas, it's inspirational." Clearly relationships and the big world of which one is a part are sources of energy and sustenance in this work and are figural components of the experience of following one's calling.

The alignment of beliefs, values and actions that emerges from pursuit of passions and calling creates changes in many ways in the lives of those who respond. A change in self perception often accompanies the work where one seems to grow smaller in the traditional sense of self. Contributing to the larger good in the world brings new sensitivities about the significance of one's self. There is often a change in the experience of the self, a reduction in one's own importance and "the feeling of insignificance [and] the realization of personal insignificance and the insignificance of people really in the grand scheme of things". One feels like "a bit player in a much larger drama" and yet this change in perspective is what is at the heart of being effective in the work. Being "humbled and being kept humbled" is key to one's effectiveness because if "you lose sight of the fact that the cause is bigger than you are, then you're fuckin' worthless". In place of the old sense of self, a new perspective seems to emerge where one's self is now aligned with the cosmos. What once was the boundary of my skin and mind now stretches to encompass the world and universe. What happens to the woods, happens to me. So in some way there is a paradoxical alteration in what is considered self. The shrinking, traditional self is replaced with an expansion and filling of the lungs of a new self that incorporates all of creation. Feelings of obligation and responsibility to a greater power emerge and float the concerns of the actor above secular, human made artifice. This work brings peace and wholeness, and comfort in one's own skin is the final paycheck for following one's passion and engaging in work worth doing. Participants expressed a great sense of integration between their beliefs, values, and activities in the world. Following one's calling leads to living a life of integrity and ushers one gently through their life, assured in their choices and full with the knowledge that they have done the 'right' thing.

The synthesis attempts to blend the palpable, idiosyncratic details of each participant, and the fundamental, structural themes into one final integrated document that captures both the unique and the universal. A final representation of the phenomenon in all its fullness is what this description aspires to.

Reflections on the Experience of Conducting a

Transcendental Phenomenological Inquiry

Personal Notes

In an attempt to be true to the spirit of transcendental phenomenology it seems appropriate to include some reflective comments on the experience of conducting research in this particular form of the qualitative research paradigm. In essence, a few words on the experience of engaging in the experience of conducting transcendental phenomenological research.

In conducting this research my challenge was to grasp and understand the ways in which the co-inquirers live, create and relate. I endeavored to be true and pure in my efforts to adopt what Husserl (1962) calls the “transcendental attitude”, referred to previously, which sheds the inherent and often tacit means by which we make meaning and understand the world around us. This is no small challenge.

In my attempts to engage the epoche and bracket the phenomenon, I was well served by deep reflection on the conversations that transpired with the participants. Focusing on that moment, the surrounding ambience and the tone and tenor of the words and emotions contained in the telling of stories aided me in catching the essence of their tale. Concentrating and reflecting on as many details of the interview experience as

possible, including the sights, sounds, fragrances, time of day, lighting, location of chairs we were sitting in, proximity to each other, others who may have interrupted us, essentially trying to recreate in my imagination as much of the fine distinction of the total experience was immensely helpful in accessing the essence of the experience. Even now as I sit here and write this description of my experience I am taken back to those conversations and have a flood of memories that make the entire experience so real, so vivid, almost physical in recollection. I can so keenly recall the experience of sitting at a picnic table beneath trees, cooled by their shade, drowning in the fragrance of blooming flowers nearby, with a gentle breeze wafting across my face as I listen to the woeful tale of Greg's attempt at selling insurance instead of serving nature...I hear the crackly sound of an older voice of one of my participants and hear her story of being "struck". I see her tears well up as I recall the sanctity of her experience and her claimed "selfishness" in keeping it for herself so as not to dilute. I am awash in the odor of an old home, one that reflects years of living and contains many old things that need dusting...I hear the buzzing insects striking against the window screen as I sit in an office bathed in cool green light from the adjacent forest. The complementary experiences that attend the conversations add layered dimensions to the story and aid the researcher in making meaning of what was heard. Through bracketing the phenomenon, I am better able to "sponge" up as much of the phenomenon through as many modes of acquisition as possible. I must hunker down, I must immerse myself in the beneath and beyond, I must get low and diminish my self so that I may be filled up with the other; let go and be "peopled" by the other.

As much as bracketing refers to the psychic dimension of clearing a space, I found it equally useful to physically limit available distracting stimuli from my awareness as I revisited the transcripts of the conversations. Reducing clutter around me, turning off the telephone, in essence applying blinders to my thinking, seeing and hearing allowed me the opportunity to dig down, to focus, to reflect deeply and retrospectively on the experience of the conversation with each individual participant.

To further achieve this state of mind and being I spent time reflecting on my state of being during previous work and life experience as a psychiatric crisis intervention, and alcohol and drug rehabilitation therapist. There seemed to be parallels between that work and what I was attempting to create/achieve in this work, considering the intense human element present, and to which I hoped to be most available. Because of the perceived similarities, I attempted to psychologically place myself back in a similar psychic orientation where I was available to receive the other in whatever form they arrived. I attempted to make myself present before the participant, as I had with innumerable clients, with an emotional and psychological posture that was available to the most unexpected report, and to witness the most bizarre with steadfast composure and a receptive disposition. It was not for me to judge, only to accept and receive. An empty vessel, I awaited their stories to fill me up.

However, unlike the days as a therapist, here, I was free from the burden of having to place their tale in some sort of theoretical framework. Indeed, to hear through the filters of theory as a means of understanding, I would be committing one of the premier mistakes this method cautions against, that of receiving and understanding through preconceived

ideas and presuppositions. Here I was free just to hear, to deeply listen to the other and imagine that I might be hearing the vibrant sound of a resonant human voice for the very first time, and be flooded with its symphonic harmony. So, as I listened to the tone and tenor of their story I wondered, what notes would this instrument play? Isn't all music still music? Hence, no matter what the tune, I would be hearing new melodies each time I cleared my conscious processes from their own incessant drumming. Liberated from the seeming spray of ever more conversations and distractions, and presencing myself in the light of the other created an experience of being outside of time. It can be summarized by the phrase "I am just here." This attitude freed me from any need to judge, evaluate or find common ground that would penetrate deeper into the 'why' of the other person's experience. Here, I was liberated just to be. The freshness of others' experience as if it were my own, and the challenge to shed prejudices, known and unknown, and see beneath the surface is indeed the mental set with which I attempted to meet the other. My hope was to create a clearing where they might show up to me, and possibly to themselves in ways that are new and previously unconsidered.

Concerns/Limitations

Tacitly contained in the posture outlined above is the assumption that I can manifest myself in this ever new and pure approach, uncluttered by my own past experience and unwitting socialization on the planet. That I can approximate something of the pure form described by Husserl (1977) seems arrogant and surely lies within the realm of illusion. Though my intentions may be most noble, the presupposition that I can achieve a pure transcendental ego is dubious. The real possibility of unshackling my Self

from myself seemed reminiscent of the modern notion of objectivity; simply sit back as a disinterested observer, confident that I am only watching and not affecting what transpires before me. This idea relates to the aforementioned work as a therapist, when I believed (for a while anyway) that this was possible. Only after some time in the field did I begin to doubt this position. I came to believe that it was unlikely that I could remain free and separate from the humanity before me; not in the calm, halcyonic attitude of the therapists office nor while attending to someone experiencing their first psychotic break on a street corner. While I did feel that I was able to gain some purchase of their experience separate from theirs, continuing in the belief that I had purely and categorically separated myself from the phenomenon transpiring before me started to wear thin and became riddled with holes that made the construction of this notion unsound, unable to support its own weight. With this admission, came a new awareness on the other side of the phenomena. Specifically, that by admitting this paradox (that I am of the other, and not just with the other) I was still able to function within a therapeutic paradigm. Aware of the limitations, yet informed by the possibility, and with greater appreciation for what may also be impacting various dimensions of personal presentation, I was, in fact, no longer observing, but actually engaging. And so, here, in this inquiry, I enter with valiant intent and heroic hope at accomplishing and achieving some semblance of the transcendental attitude. Attending these aspirations is the very real awareness that I may only approximate this ideal. In this admission I also confront a presupposition that accompanies me in the practice of the inquiry, thereby making public what would

otherwise be a private and possibly tacit expectation or presupposition about the method.

Another concern arose regarding the idea of the transcendental attitude and its relation to authenticity in the presentation of self. If attitude intends our collection of values and beliefs or habits of making sense of the world around us, in essence our way of knowing and being vis-à-vis the world, then there are, ostensibly, multiple ‘ways’ available for us as we are capable of holding divergent attitudes simultaneously, and in regard to various circumstances. If, in fact, we can occupy multiple ‘attitudes’, including the natural attitude and the transcendental attitude, then how many other attitudes or selves, and ways of knowing are available for occupation? And so, if indeed there is an authentic self, we must only know it in relation to something inauthentic. Likewise, we must understand the “transcendental attitude”, at least, in relation to the “natural attitude”. Hence, there may be numerous inauthentic selves, or attitudes, available in our arsenal of personality profiles hiding in the trick bag known as our psyche. Presumably we would know when we are presenting our authentic self and when we are not. If we accept these assumptions, we could argue that we may not know when we are being authentic. Our knowledge may be incomplete. Surely there are issues and items that “we do not know, that we do not know”. At some measure are we not unconscious of at least part of our unconsciousness? And of that of which we are aware, might it be an elusive awareness, one that surfaces only rarely and in unknown quantity? When it does, it enters into the arena of “knowing what we don’t know”. Something has entered into consciousness that we were previously unaware of. We now know, but know with the

knowledge that we did not know prior. Even if authenticity does reveal itself, there is still the possibility that we may miss the cues on our perceptual horizon relegating it to the arena of “I don’t know what I know”. And in the interview experience, that translates into missing the brilliance of the other when it is displayed before us. Something was made available but we failed to apprehend that knowledge, thereby perpetuating our ignorance.

On the other hand, one could argue against the idea that there is an authentic self that can be presented. Is the self not a socially constructed self that emerges over time through relationship and dialogue? (I concede...another assumption!) Is the presentation of self possibly only the most recent version of what is the recursive, emergent self as it evolves and is created in each new moment in social time? Hence, the immediate presentation of self in the present moment may be the most authentic self available in the current space time trajectory. It is possible that this immediately present version is, in fact, the most authentic self available, given the dynamics and tenets of social construction (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). For when we are with others (and even when we are not), are we not whoever we have become in the context of that and all previous social engagements? Brushing away the dust of years of sedimentation over what may be assumed to be the kernel of one’s True self, may never get us down to that which is assumed to be True, and out there awaiting discovery. Instead, it may only bring us to another layer of the social construction, but yet, not to some imagined “pure and fundamental” layer. Indeed, what we may call “phony” in others may actually be only what is phony for us; only a projection of what is not our current self, (but a possible

part of a previous self?) onto the other. The other, who is perceived as “phony” may be in their most authentic moment, and we will have missed it for failure to appreciate our own psychological constitution! The ‘there’ of the true self may be an illusion on our own journey to discover the latest version of the social construction of our experience of ourselves. Maybe what they say is true: there is no there, there, only here. ‘Here’ is authenticity, not some vague, misty, unidentified locale in the distant future to which we can only aspire and never arrive. Maybe what is, is what is.

All of this is to say that apprehending the transcendental attitude seems a slippery process, one fraught with uncertainty and doubt about our real capacity for acquisition. Have we got it? How would we know? And even if we can have some knowledge of what we might have gained access to, the larger question looming out there in the darkness is how much? How much did we access and how much is yet to be discovered? Just how big is that ice berg shimmering, lurking, there below the waterline of our unconscious? To what extent did I achieve the ideal? Totally? Maybe the remaining question is really one not worthy of reflection. What is, is what is.

So it’s possible that there is no ‘unshackling’ to be done? Maybe it is only turning our consciousness such that we access new selves in self and the other within the context of the phenomenological interview. Who we are in the context of these conversations invites not only the participant into new awareness’s of self, but also introduces the researcher to her self as well. This interchange is situated on the cusp of new social knowledge of each self, and the relational synthesis becomes another rich vein in the gold mine of “self in evolution” available for discovery. The epoche requests that we bring into

awareness our 'way of knowing'. Our personal epistemology is being called upon in service of transcendent knowledge. Who we are and how we present ourselves to ourselves, and to others is the invitation here to discover what is authentic, 'now'. Despite all the attention to my transcendental attitude, and my epoche, we have Husserl to thank for not divorcing us so thoroughly from the social world that we swim in an undifferentiated solipsistic soup. He seemed to know that the knowledge is in the relationship, the knowledge is in 'the things themselves', it is in the relationship of the noema and the noesis, not some imagined future, or other, or alternate reality, and this is reflected in his comment which is quoted in Moustakas:

In this solitude, I am not a single individual who has somehow willfully cut himself off from the society of mankind....All of mankind, and the whole distinction and ordering of the personal pronouns, has become a phenomenon within my epoche. (1994, p. 58)

We live in a social world. And in phenomenology, we are situated alone in this social world with the responsibility and freedom to see the world again, for the first time, and then to reflect upon it to discover our meanings and the essence of experience. It is within this social context that we begin the process of understanding others. Various human oriented professions were referred to earlier as outlets for the application of the ideas contained in this method. As I think about these vocations late in this paper, they seem amenable to the ideas contained in this approach to knowledge. In any arena where we attempt to increase health, quality of life, knowledge or achieve deeper relationship and understanding with the other, this method has true potential to leverage the tools, knowledge, skills, and abilities that the professional brings to her craft. For it is not

enough to only review knowledge and its creation and acquisition, we must also consider its application or use in the lived world. While knowledge has value in its own right, it is knowledge in action that approaches its true potential.

Appendix A

In the application of the phenomenological method there are various ways in which the data may be analyzed. In general the following form given by Polkinghorne (1989) applies:

1. Gather naïve descriptions of an experience from a number of co-inquirers who claim to have had the experience.
2. Analyze the descriptions with an eye to the constituents or common elements of the experience.
3. Create an accurate, clear, and articulate description of the experience.

Greater detail can be found in Moustakas' (1994) review of the van Kaam method. His modifications of it include the following steps:

1. Listing and preliminary grouping: Here he suggests that every expression relevant to the experience be listed.
2. Reduction and elimination: This step is to determine the invariant constituents which are those elements that are fundamental to the experience. These constituents are analyzed with regard to two criteria:
 - a) Does the expression contain a moment of the experience that is necessary and sufficient for understanding the phenomenon?
 - b) Can it be extracted and labeled?
3. Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents: This step results in clustering the constituents into themes and labeling them. These are the core themes of the experience.
4. Validation: The invariant constituents are checked against the complete transcription of each participant. Are they expressed explicitly in the transcription? If not are they compatible with what is contained in the transcription? If they are incompatible, they are irrelevant and should be discarded.
5. Construction of a textural description using the themes and invariant constituents for each participant including verbatim examples.
6. Construction of a structural description of the experience based on the textural description and imaginative variation.
7. Construction of a composite textural description that integrates all of the individual textural descriptions into a universal textural description.
8. Construction of a composite structural description that integrates all of the individual structural descriptions into a universal structural description.

9. Finally, synthesize the composite textural and composite structural descriptions into an integrated whole which captures the meanings and essences of the experience for the group as a whole.

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