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PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE PROCESS AND ROLE OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION IN RESEARCH

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1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an exploration into the philosophical field of phenomenology and the possibility of performing a phenomenological reduction. Interest in this topic was sparked by an interest in the lifeworlds of Third-culture kids and the experiences and challenges they face in various aspects of their lives. However, personal bias and influence is a central concern within this research as the researcher is a TCK herself. Therefore this research aims to explore and understand the possibilities of using phenomenology as a methodology in future research, as well as maps out the attempt at a phenomenological reduction process. Using phenomenology and a phenomenological reduction attempts to conclude whether or not it is possible for the researcher to separate themselves from their past experiences, in order to eliminate bias and personal influence in any future research done concerning TCK's.

This thesis first briefly introduces the concepts of phenomenology as well what a phenomenological reduction is, and discusses the challenges and importance of phenomenology. This base further leads to explaining how the researcher has attempted to perform a phenomenological reduction, how it has been done, and whether or not it was successful. The phenomenological reduction process was a journey taken over the course of a few months while researching phenomenology and the reduction process. A personal diary, meditative and self-reflective sessions, as well as writing session were undertaken in order to explore the self, and attempt to separate oneself from the experiences of being a Third-culture kid. Therefore this research paper attempts to explore whether or not it is possible for a researcher to separate themselves from any and all research that is being executed.
2. PHENOMENOLOGY

2.1 DEFINITION AND BRIEF HISTORY OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology is a fascinating branch of philosophy, focusing on the study of consciousness and investigation of experiences. Phenomenology has many definitions and interpretations, and has been vastly expanded on since the ideas were primarily put forth in the early 20th century by philosophers such as Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and especially, and most prominently, the German philosopher Edmund Husserl. The essence of phenomenology can be summarized briefly as the study of phenomena. That said, this study and investigation into the understanding of phenomena and experience is an immense ocean of thoughts, speculations, definitions and opinions, all attempting to make sense of the word itself. Husserl is known as the father of phenomenology however, phenomenology has existed without a name or label for centuries. The reflection and exploration on experience and states of consciousness in humans have been tackled for centuries by Buddhist and Hindu philosophers exploring meditation, all the way to philosophers like Kant and Descartes who explored imagination, perception and thought, all the while exploring phenomenology. (Smith, 2013, para. 35) The ideas and disciples behind the study of phenomenology were growing for centuries, and finally took full form in Husserl's work which was followed by a surge of phenomenological writings in the early 20th century, which added to the dimensions and variety of the definitions, types of phenomenology, conceptions, methods of exploration and opinions concerning the vast ocean that is phenomenology. (Smith, 2013, para. 36-37)

Phenomenology is not limited to merely sensory qualities such as seeing and hearing as experience, as human experiences are much more affluent in content than merely experiencing sensations. Phenomenology includes the meanings behind these experiences, the significance of events, objects, people, the self and time, as they appear and are experienced in an individual's "life-world". (Smith, 2013, para. 4) "Life-world" is explained by Husserl as the understanding that human beings obtain from that which they experience, through the "familiar context of sense-references" which therefore forms a "horizon" within which human beings of various forms of behavior can orient themselves, and distinguish their individual "life-worlds". (Held, 1998, p. 21) This "horizon" consists of all unrecognized and recognized reality that surrounds the individual, and humans lead a constant conscious or unconscious existence within this "life-world", which is made up of everything one experiences and understands. Husserl argues in his work that although life-worlds are
individualistic in nature, they are nonetheless a “cultural accomplishment” as well as a “universal mental acquisition”. (Zelic, 2007, p. 414) What this means is that although the life-world of the individual person may differ and even hold vast differences, they are nonetheless based on a similar structure that is universal in nature and is “meant as the world for all”. (Zelic, 2007, p. 414) Held discusses a similar viewpoint by exploring the idea of cultures as life-worlds, and argues that every culture is a life-world, and that all cultures therefore share similar characteristics. The structure of life-worlds is open to differences and variations due to the pluralistic nature of cultures across the globe however, Held argues that there is a common ground that all of these different variations of life-worlds rest upon i.e. “the one world” which has limits on variation. (Held, 1998, p. 21)

When looking at phenomenology as the study of one's experiences and the meanings behind these experiences, Smith highlights that the main construct of an experience is its intentionality, put forth by Husserl, i.e. “the directness of experience toward things in the world, the property of consciousness that is a consciousness of or about something.”. (Smith, 2013, para. 8) Phenomenology examines the structures of experiences that come from “perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity” (Smith, 2013, para. 8) with intentionality, the idea that these experiences are directed by a consciousness, at their core. Intentionality distinguishes that which is called a person's “mind” or “consciousness”, i.e. everything that we are aware of in our environment, and exists in every moment of a person's mental life, in “perceiving, desiring, remembering, fearing, loving, doubting, judging and even dreaming or day-dreaming”. (McIntyre & Smith, 1982, xiii.)

Husserl's work was a new and meticulous method of philosophical inquiry that provided a new method of approaching humans and human experiences, founded on a “radical shift on perspective”, and this new method was an attempt to explore and cast light upon the human world and concrete human experiences. (Luckmann, 1978, p. 7) This new descriptive method birthed a priori science that attempted to provide a reform for all sciences through this instrument of rigorous scientific philosophy. (Husserl, 1927, p. 2) Husserl believed that all scientific findings were irrevocably contaminated by a researcher's agenda, opinions, interests, beliefs, and assumptions about the world, which would ultimately lead to unreliable findings. Through phenomenology, Husserl wanted to move to a place of scientific discovery that was “pure” i.e. free from anything non-scientific, and he believed this was possible to achieve through a method he referred to as
phenomenological reduction, also referred to as bracketing, epoché or transcendental reduction. (Husserl, 1927, p. 2)

2.2 PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

2.2.1 WHAT IS A PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION?

Husserl describes a phenomenological reduction as a “meditative practice” where the individual is able to free oneself of all the aspects of life that one merely accepts as “true”, or in other words; “liberate oneself from the captivation in which one is held by all that one accepts as being the case.” (Cogan, 2006, para. 4) Husserl believed that once one was able to escape this cage of acceptance, the individual would be able to view the world differently, liberated from the “contamination” of the psyche or of pre-suppositions, assumptions, prejudgements and prejudices that one might hold about the world. (Cogan, 2006, para. 4) What Husserl attempts to do with phenomenological reduction is question the legitimacy and validity of scientific inquiry, focusing on the assumptions it makes and the foundations it is based on. Husserl wanted to understand the connection between the processes of thinking and logic, and believed that “the results of scientific investigation are a function of both the architectonics of scientific hypotheses and the psychological coloring of the investigating scientist”. What Husserl means by this, is that he believed that all scientific research is “contaminated” by the researcher him/herself due to the epistemological and psychological assumptions he/she maintains about the world as well as by the world itself. (Cogan, 2006, para. 6) Husserl’s work is critical of scientific inquiry as he believed it to lack a “philosophically rigorous foundation” as it does not consider the “psychological assumptions” of an individual or scientist, or even the “framework of its own inquiry” i.e. the assumptions concerning time, space, gravity, causality etc. (Cogan, 2006, para. 61) To conclude, performing a phenomenological reduction aims to eliminate this and a phenomenological reduction is a gradually obtained answer to the problem of adequacy within the scientific field and scientific inquiry. (Cogan, 2006, para. 6)

In order to access the “pure world”, a world free from pre-suppositions and prejudices, all judgements, prejudices and epistemologies should be peeled away in order to return to the “things themselves” i.e. the world as it is before it is contaminated by “the categories of scientific inquiry or the psychological assumptions of the scientist”. (Cogan, 2006, para. 3) This “pure world” would then act as a new foundation for knowledge. This peeling away technique and suspension of
prejudices is described by Husserl as consisting of two main processes; first an “abstention” or “epoché” and secondly a “reduction proper”. (Cogan, 2006, para. 3) Husserl believed that humans exist in “captivation-in-an-acceptedness” in regard to the the world we live in, where we take for granted everything about our existence and live and exist within the world unquestionably and imperceptibly. An epoché, also referred to as bracketing, is a the process where an individual will no longer “accept” this way of viewing and understanding the world, thereby escaping “captivity”. (Cogan, 2006, para. 34) The epoché is neither a belief in or denial of the world, but is a transcendental reflective moment where the individual reaches a “suspension of judgments about the existence or non-existence of the external world” and becomes focused on the pure phenomena of the world itself. (Linsmayer, 2011, para. 3)

The second moment in the phenomenological reduction, is the reduction proper, which Cogan describes as “an inquiring back into consciousness.” (Cogan, 2006, para. 3) The reduction proper is a moment where the individual becomes aware of his/her escape from “captivation-in-an-acceptedness”. When the epoché is the method one has used to become free of the “captivity of the unquestioned acceptance of the everyday world”, the reduction is therefore the “recognition of that acceptance as an acceptance” and it is becoming aware of this that gives evidence of the individual having achieved transcendental insight and reflection, and “is transcendental precisely because it is an insight from outside the acceptedness that is holding us captive”. (Cogan, 2006, para. 36) Cogan highlights that it is important to remember that although these two processes are different and equally important in the move towards a successful reduction, these processes are not “steps” that one takes in a specific chronological order, but are far more abstract. One does not first complete the epoché or bracketing of the world in order to prepare for the next process of reduction proper, but rather, these processes are in fact “internal logical moments” that occur simultaneously. (Cogan, 2006, para. 32) Both moments do not occur separately and one cannot occur without the other. (Cogan, 2006, para. 38)

However, a phenomenological reduction does not appear as if from nowhere, and these two steps are not easy to take. A reduction is a process that one does not, as Husserl states, accidentally achieve, but is a rigorous procedure of philosophical and psychological effort that is difficult to both achieve and maintain. A reduction process is a regimen that attempts to transform a person by attaining a new perspective on the world and its phenomena. Additionally, once a reduction process in phenomenology has been performed, this does not mean that the outcome is valid for all time. A phenomenological reduction is something that Husserl stressed should be repeated, developed and
Cogan outlines this transformation as a process of rigorous meditation that requires persistence and mental strength. He stresses that a reduction meditation process is unique and differs from “ordinary meditation” which he claims only involves the mind. Alternatively, he states that a reduction process is a radicalization of “self-meditation” (Cogan, 2006, para. 42) and this process of meditation requires “the participation of the entire individual and initially brings about a radical transformation”. (Cogan, 2006, para. 3) Once this meditative practice has been completed, a phenomenologist is able to view the world without contamination, and liberate themselves from everything they perceive or believe as being “true” and are thusly “free from any contamination that presuppositions of conceptual framework or psyche might contribute” (Cogan, 2006, para. 4). He further describes the process of phenomenological reduction as a “regimen designed to transform a philosopher into a phenomenologist” by attaining a specific type of perspective on the world phenomena. He explains that the road to attaining this perspective is “no mere mental exercise”, and requires an almost radical form of meditation where the entirety of consciousness of the individual is required, in order to achieve a transformation that is so radical, he even compares it to converting one's religion or belief system. (Cogan, 2006, para. 3) Fink describes a phenomenological reduction as the “tearing oneself free” from one's own gullible and naive perception of the world, and states that it is not simply a “theoretical, intellectual act” but rather a “spiritual movement” that consumes the individual and provides a “fundamental transformation down to our roots”. (as cited in Cogan, 2006, para. 56) However, although it is possible to thoroughly learn about phenomenology as well as both steps that make up a phenomenological reduction, the actual performance of this process is incredibly complex. It is clear that undergoing a significant transformative process of everything we know, which is so significant it is similar to adopting a new belief system, is far from an occurrence that happens in everyday life. So what is it that really happens, and what can we do in practice in order to successfully achieve a phenomenological reduction?

2.2.2 HOW TO PERFORM A PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

Cogan explains his views on how a reduction process could possibly be executed. He emphasizes that at the very least, there are clues to knowing whether or not a process has been completed at all. As Husserl and other phenomenologists describe the reduction as a “radical” transformation similar to changing one's belief system or religious conversion, it can be concluded that if at the end of this process the individual cannot describe this as being true or even similar to a feeling of such a
transformation, the process can therefore be deemed unsuccessful. As a reduction is an exploration performed by the consciousness into the the consciousness, great cognitive strength is required. Cogan phrases this exploration as “an exercise in determining who the “I” is whenever we say “I AM”” and is hence an; “interrogation of the self by the self”. (Cogan, 2006, para. 61)

The reduction process begins with undergoing self-meditation. Classic forms of meditation include the idea that the individual is zoned out of the world, and is one with his/her thoughts alone. Sitting quietly, comfortably and still, while focusing only on one's mind and controlling ones thoughts, is a good place to start. However, as mentioned above, Cogan describes this phenomenological meditation as a “species of meditation” as it is different from ordinary meditation “which involves only the mind” and explains that; “this more radical form requires the participation of the entire individual” as well as the pathos of the individual. Nonetheless, beginning with ordinary meditation where the individual makes sure they are comfortable and will not be disrupted is an excellent way to prepare and begin. The aim of these initial preparations is to eliminate the distractions of the world around the individual “leaving only the meditative task to occupy one’s attention”. (Cogan, 2006, para. 64)

Once this has been achieved the self meditation can begin. In various forms of meditation the objective is to clear ones mind and essentially focus on nothing at all and include using and exerting one's imagination or repeating sounds or chants or incantations. Ordinary meditation often focuses on sitting in a quiet place, alone and learning how to clear the mind and accept and deal with disturbing or disruptive thoughts. However, in phenomenological reduction meditation, the individual must focus on the self, and the self alone, making it the only object of the meditation process. When the minds focus is on the self, the radicalization of this is, as Cogan describes it; the individual “relentlessly pushing back and forcing the self onto itself”. The method of doing this is repeating and affirming “I am” in order to begin to feel and experience the “I” as it exists in the present. One will begin to feel the “I”-ness of it and the individual will begin to become “aware of the three “I”s: the human ego, the constituting ego, and the onlooker” (Cogan, 2006, para. 65-66) Cogan states that very little progress will be made in the first attempts at this process, but that repeating this will eventually lead to a rise in consciousness and moments of clarity where “you will know “I AM”” as the individuals perspectives begin to change. (Cogan, 2006, para. 66) Additionally, Fink explained that an important initial step in the reduction process is “laying the ground” of a philosophy and emphasized that “the laying-of-a-ground of a philosophy is the original beginning of the philosopher himself, not with and for others but for himself alone” and that this
“ground” does not consist of other philosophies, ideas or propositions but “rather, the ground is precisely the philosopher him or herself”. (Cogan, 2006, para. 42) Finally, Luft points out that Husserl himself emphasized that this process of reduction and entering into the world of phenomenology must be repeated and practiced, as phenomenology is not “a device that, once performed, is valid for all times”, and that someone who has been “converted” would forever remain so. (Luft, 2004, p. 199) The process of a phenomenological reduction is without question tricky to understand let alone perform, due to the the challenging nature of phenomenology overall.

2.2.2 CHALLENGES WITH PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology is undoubtedly a highly debated topic of philosophy. The various ideas and theories are often extremely complex and difficult issues to discuss, process, and even understand. Phenomenology as a branch of philosophy has no doubt been assessed and criticized. Luckmann describes phenomenology as incredibly descriptive and at odds with concrete empirical science, where he states the data obtained from phenomenological methods are of “an elementary nature”, due to the fact that they are found by inspecting one's own experiences. (Luckmann, 1978, p. 8) Luft points out that the phenomena that the field attempts to explore can be incredibly obscure and difficult to deal with. For example, the phenomena of memory and ego, are highly abstract and, as stated by Luft; “inner experience can even deceive me; memory might be false or incomplete” and understanding and interpreting one's consciousness, ego and state of mind is not only tricky, but can even be deemed as impossible. (Luft, 2004, p. 210)

Finlay raises important questions in her article concerning phenomenological research methods as well as how phenomenology can be used in practice. Some of her main concerns include: the definitions of phenomenology i.e. “How tightly or loosely should we define what counts as “phenomenology” ”, as well as how do different interpretations, including research subjectivity, affect definitions of phenomenology and how does this in turn affect the field in practice?” (Finlay, 2009, p. 6) Additionally, can there be concrete and distinctive characteristics of phenomenology and where do the boundaries and parameters lie, and what “distinguishes phenomenology) from other variants of qualitative research that focus on subjective meanings”. (Finlay, 2009, p. 6) In comparison, Giorgi states that phenomenology will always maintain four main core characteristics that “hold across all variations”. These include rigorously descriptive research, the use of phenomenological reductions, the exploration of “intentional relationships between persons and
situations” and finally, uncover “the essences, or structures, of meaning immanent in human experiences through the use of imaginative variation”. (Giorgi, 1989, as cited by Finlay, 2012, p. 18) Nonetheless, variations in phenomenological research methods continue to arise and exist, and is a phenomena itself that cannot be denied. Some methodologies will stay close to Giorgi's four main principles while simultaneously reflecting their own theories and ideas, while others may stray far from Husserl's techniques, while still exploring lived experiences and the meanings behind them. (Finlay, 2012, p. 18)

Criteria is a parameter that decides whether or not a method of research is phenomenological. However, why are Husserl and Giorgi ultimately the only theories that a researcher must use both as a comparison and a ground for their work? How much can these ideas be expanded on? Can a researcher's method be phenomenological if the researcher in question has adopted a phenomenological attitude or mind-set, or is there always more that must be done? Must a phenomenological reduction be performed? Finlay personally states that “phenomenological research is phenomenological when it involves both rich description of the lifeworld or “lived experience” which attempts to abstain from judgements and prejudices concerning the experience or phenomenon, and where the researcher has embraced an open and “special” phenomenological attitude and a phenomenological reduction is present. Any research that does not include at its core the idea of lived experience and the description of “the things in their appearing”, cannot be said to be phenomenological. She further emphasizes that researchers must be clear about what method of philosophy or phenomenology is being used, and goes on to stress that it is important to be aware of which methods are appropriate in which contexts. Hence; “a phenomenological method is sound if it links appropriately to some phenomenological philosophy or theory, and if its claims about method are justified and consistent”. (Finlay, 2012, p. 19)

From personal research it can be concluded that definitions, descriptions and interpretations of phenomenology can vary, and are therefore difficult to grasp. The ideas put forth by phenomenology are extensive and often extremely abstract, making it difficult to reach conclusions when one is bombarded with such large existential and transcendental questions and ideas. For example, when attempting to understand the ego or an experience, questions such as; what is the ego, does the ego differ greatly in all people, how does the ego affect an individual's experiences, tend to arise and often baffle. Furthermore, what constitutes an experience, and how can we know what an experience is? What is consciousness, and is all consciousness a consciousness of something? These types of questions are absolutely endless when dealing with phenomenology, and
although various philosophers and phenomenologists have attempted to explore, open up and explain these phenomena, it can nonetheless get quite confusing and overwhelming. What then is the relevance and purpose of studying and exploring this irrevocably ambiguous field of philosophy?

2.2.4 IMPORTANCE OF PHENOMENOLOGY

When exploring phenomenology, it is clear that it is a vast and substantial topic, full of various theories and opinions, all attempting to explain and understand human experiences and the meanings behind these experiences. As we move through this literature however, the inevitable question of 'Why?' arises. Why is this topic relevant and interesting, and more importantly why is phenomenology important in our everyday lives?

In his book concerning *Phenomenology and the Science of Behavior*, Thines states that “the very use of the word 'phenomenology' raises immediate suspicion in many scientific psychological circles” (Thines, 1977, p. 15), as it can be understood to mean an exclusively descriptive, introspective and self-analyzing approach. Thines himself reproaches this view, as he believes it to be naive and “shallow”, and is convinced that in the world of psychology, phenomenological issues and epistemologies do hold merit and value. He admits that 'consciousness' and 'subject' are abstract and therefore difficult to explore and analyze however, argues that modern phenomenology has stepped forward from its early years of “idealism” and speculation. Thines explains that the concepts would be made clearer “if they referred to 'constitution', i.e. the active building up of the individual's own (or 'subjective') world according to perceptual and motor capacities.”(Thines, 1977, p. 14) which would increase the legitimacy of claims and conclusions in the field of phenomenology. He goes on to say that phenomenology within the scientific field of psychology should not be viewed as a “purely philosophical dispute” (Thines, 1977, p. 14) attempting to strip scientific psychology of its merits or accomplishments, both theoretical and practical, as in its early years phenomenological psychology may have manifested itself almost entirely by “philosophical speculation”, but has since moved towards becoming its own “autonomous field...distinct from transcendental reflection”. (Thines, 1977, p. 14)

Husserl discovered the significance and need for phenomenology and the performance of a reduction, when he became aware that all of scientific work and inquiry was based upon a false
foundation. He believed all of scientific inquiry to be compromised by the “psychological assumptions of the scientist” as well as the assumptions made by the entirety of the world that surrounds us. Husserl believed that through phenomenology and the performance of a reduction, the scientific field could be reformed in order to provide scientific knowledge, free from bias. (Husserl, 1927, p. 2) This idea is important for, if all scientific theory and fact are contaminated and compromised, this would mean that everything we hold to be true may in fact be different from what we believe. Although it is unclear whether or not it would possible to have all scientific inquiry be free from bias and contamination, exploring phenomenology is nonetheless important, as being aware that there is a problem is always the first step towards a solution.

Smith explains that phenomenology deals with the study of meaning “in a wide sense...that includes more than what is expressed in language”. (Smith, 2013, para. 38) Attempting to understand the meanings behind human experiences is challenging however, understanding that the knowledge we have about the world, other people, phenomena, and about ourselves should not be blindly accepted as true, helps us to expand our thinking and perspectives, and provides us with questions that may be difficult to answer, but are nonetheless important to be aware of. In order to provide unbiased knowledge a researcher or scientist must not only be aware that bias is problem, it would also be ideal if the researcher was able to fully separate themselves from the research being done, and view knowledge from Husserl's phenomenological perspective, free from any contamination. With these thoughts in mind, various concerns about the scientific field arise. Is studying phenomenology and performing a phenomenological reduction ideal or necessary in all fields of research? Can any real data or information be released and believed to be unbiased without phenomenology? Should phenomenology and the performance of a phenomenological reduction be a necessary requirement from every researcher attempting to explore and explain the world and human experiences? These questions do not have clear and simple answers, but are nonetheless interesting to explore. It is important to note that Husserl himself does not provide a simple solution to this problem, and his phenomenological quest and persistent enquiry into the foundations of knowledge, was not “for certainty, but for the founding of the conditions for the possibility of knowledge”, in a way to cast light upon the connection between “pure logic and the concrete processes of thinking”. (Cogan, 2006, para. 9)

Another important note when discussing academic work and the foundations of knowledge, are the issues of authenticity and performativity. MacKenzie, McShane and Wilcox, write about striving for authenticity in academic work. They state that authenticity raises questions concerning human
identity, as well as our goals or purpose in life. Human nature leads us to attempt to live authentically and “not in imitation of anyone else”, and helps separate ourselves from our ego through an awareness of the self. The author's further state that this authenticity is “a sacred order, a deep universal moral force” which if ignored, would result in a world where identity is something completely trivial. (MacKenzie, McShane & Wilcox, 2007, para. 10)

Authenticity and the authentic self however, can be overshadowed by the pressures of performativity. MacKenzie et al. state that “in a performative institutional (university) regime, “value replaces values” ”, resulting in a direct influence on research and the researcher. (MacKenzie, McShane & Wilcox, 2007, para. 8) The authors use the term performativity to refer to the value placed in a university environment on academic work, that increases cost-effectiveness and competitiveness within the institution. Ball defines performativity as a “technology”, a method and culture of regulation that uses certain agendas to attempt to control through “rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic)”. The performance of an individual serves as a measure of productivity, which in turn represents their “worth, quality or value...within a field of judgement”. (Ball, 2010, p. 216) However, the issue of judgement is important. Who determines what is valuable and what is not? What are these judgments based on, and how are they measured? Ball further discusses how teachers in certain fields of education lose aspects of their integrity and creativity in their work due to the pressures of performativity. Performativity can lead to a very personal struggle in one's work when one is faced with the decision of choosing between integrity and authenticity in one's work, and one's duty to others. (Ball, 2010, p. 216)

The same can occur in academic circles as well. Performativity plays a significant role in academic circles, when the pressure to perform and to present oneself “appropriately” through “promotions application, excellence awards, performance reviews” as well as other contexts, may directly influence the values of the research or researcher in question. Through such “fabrications”, academic work can become corrupted, and these fabrications are the steps that result in the “enterprising academic”. (MacKenzie, McShane & Wilcox, 2007, para. 8) The problems of performativity can be seen in personal internal conflicts. Sustaining such images and fabrications can lead to ethical and emotional issues, which can affect “intellectual, emotional and spiritual well-being”. This inner conflict is due to the conflict and tension between authenticity and fabrication, which can also lead to confusion concerning value and personal and professional priorities as well. (MacKenzie et al, 2007, para. 9)
There are differences in identity and the self when dealing with either performativity and authenticity. MacKenzie et al. describe the performative self as a fabrication, a “socially constructed self, created and confined by our respective social and institutional laws and rules”. Authenticity in turn introduces us to our inner self that can identify “performative demands” and deal with them mindfully. (MacKenzie et al, 2007, para. 11) MacKenzie et al. believe that ignoring authenticity would result in losing the “moral, ethical and educational purpose of the university”. The culture of performativity is easy to get swept away in, and can often be so loud and influential, that the authentic self can be hard to hear.

In the context of phenomenology, exploring one's self, identity and experiences can help to promote authenticity over performativity. We have previously learned from Held and Husserl that our life worlds are directly influenced by the social and cultural world that surrounds us, and are a “cultural accomplishment”. (Zelic, 2007, p. 414) Hence, the performative self and the ego can possibly be viewed when exploring ones life-world. Looking at how certain social constructs influence our identity as well as our actions, can help separate ourselves from the performative self, and move to a more authentic version of who we are and what we want to achieve. This would promote the authenticity of the academic work produced, as well as help researchers and academics stay true to themselves. Performing a phenomenological reduction or even merely exploring phenomenology and all it has to offer, could work hand in hand with authenticity, exploring the self and one's identity, which in turn would also work towards a foundation of “true” or “pure” knowledge, free from contamination and free from the pressures of performativity. Although phenomenology as a topic is a challenging one, it is nonetheless still an important topic to consider when executing research. If all scientific research is contaminated and influenced by performativity, should a phenomenological reduction be a requirement of all scientific inquiry? And if so, is a phenomenological reduction something that can be achieved personally?
3. PERSONAL PROCESS OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

3.1 PURPOSE FOR PERFORMING A PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

The purpose for exploring the field of phenomenology was initiated by interest in TCK (Third Culture Kid) experiences. A TCK (Third-culture kid), also referred to as global nomads, cultural hybrids and cultural chameleons, are children who have spent a large part of their childhood and developmental years away from their parents home country, also known as their country of origin or passport country. (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, as cited in Barker & Moore, 2012, para. 3) These children often experience various different cultures as they move from country to country and therefore can struggle with a sense of belonging as well as alienation and rootlessness. Due to the mobility experienced during childhood, TCK's can and often do develop “a sense of relationship to all of the cultures while not having full ownership in any”, and form a strong sense of belonging to people of similar experiences therefore forming a said “third culture” of their very own. (Greenholtz & Kim, 2009, para. 13) My background includes being born in Finland, moving to Hong Kong for three years, then Bangkok for six year, moving back to Finland for one year, and then spending three years in Singapore before settling back in Finland at the age of twelve. Growing up my childhood was full of moving and goodbyes. Being a third-culture kid as well, the interest in exploring their experiences is natural and instinctive, as interest into how one has become who he or she is, can be very captivating and can often provide meaningful and even eye-opening insight into the research being executed.

In order to explore TCK experiences however, the issues of bias, pre-conceptions and prejudice must be tackled and they must be important and prominent aspect of any research executed. Therefore an exploration into phenomenology and a possible reduction process was undertaken. As phenomenology is the exploration into the “structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view” (Smith, 2013, para. 1) and looks into the experience of or about something, phenomenology is therefore an ideal methodology to use when attempting to research a topic that is so heavily based upon experiences, in this case TCK experiences. Hence the reduction process was undertaken in order to see if it is possible for a researcher to separate themselves from the experiences that make up a significant part of their identity, in order to gather information that would be free from bias and personal influence. This thesis attempts to do so and therefore acts as a base for future research concerning TCK's and TCK experiences.
3.2 METHOD OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

This researches method of phenomenological reduction was different to solely engaging in the meditation described in Chapter 2.2.2. Self-reflection and meditation were undeniably important aspects of the reduction process however, other forms of exploration were also undertaken. Primarily, an autobiographical reflection centering around experiences of moving from country to country as a child was written out. This text was analyzed and taken apart, and re-written multiple times to attempt to focus solely on the experiences of being a TCK. Words that related to TCK literature were selected out of this text, expanded upon and linked together using mind-maps. Each mind-map was initially concerning individual key-words that arose during the writing process as well as during research. Each key-word was mapped out and included discussion concerning, personal memories, questions that arose as well as some research concerning the topic. Attempts as linking these key words was also made. (The expansion done for all of these words can be found in the researchers personal research diary kept throughout the process however, a few examples are provided, see Appendix. 1-4) The meanings of these words were reflected on and the importance questioned. TCK literature and the experiences of other TCK's were analyzed and compared in order to provide further insight and perspectives.

Meditation and self-reflection were also performed. After each session of writing out the autobiography of TCK experiences, a set period of time was reserved for self-reflection. The following are a series of questions that would often arise during this meditation process:

- What did this experience mean to me personally?
- How would this experience be viewed by other people?
- Have others also experience something similar?
- Was anything new revealed?
- How do TCK experiences affect an individual later in life?
- What have I learned about myself and others?

Prior to centering around these questions, new and more specific questions would begin to form as well, and notes would be made during this reflection process in order to inspire further research and speculation concerning phenomenology as well as the experiences of TCK's. Some example of these questions are:
• What does it mean to be Finnish? What defines it, and who decides?
• Can the life that happens around us shape us (e.g. childhood), even if we have no memories of that time?
• How does growing up in an international school environment change you?
• What are some of the positive and negative effects of an international school environment?
• What kinds of mistakes can teachers make when dealing with students from so many different backgrounds?
• What is the definition of “home”, and how can different definitions shape who you are as a person?
• What is a “home country” when your location/home/houses/family has always been mobile and constantly change?
• Can transplanting things from your old life into a new one help or hinder adjustment?
• What are the challenges of TCK's entering new schools, and what can be done to help them adjust, fit in and make friends?
• How can students be made aware of new social behavior and social groups that they are unfamiliar with at a new school? Should they just figure it out for themselves?
• What are some of the challenges of being a Hidden Immigrant, how can it positively or negatively affect your life?
• How does one's identity change when going back to a “home country” where you are supposed to fit in?
• How damaging can it be to receive negative attention from the things that make you who you are?
• What is it that causes negative reactions to different backgrounds?
• Would it be easier for TCK's and immigrant children to simply conform to the culture and language, and let go of their past lives? How harmful can this be?
• How can parents prepare children for constant moves and re-entry?
• How can parents help mentally and emotionally prepare children?
• What is the importance of friends and social status for children, and how does it link with adjustment and success?

These questions would often expand into different areas of speculation, and during the reflection process it was important to stay focused on the experiences of TCK’s, and try to stay on this specific
topic, but this was often challenging. There are various challenges that TCK's face during as well as after their time abroad, and research into other TCK's lives was conducted in order to provide a comparison between personal experiences and the experiences of others. The entire attempt during each reflection/meditative session as well as during the writing processes, was to aim at separating oneself from the experiences, and learning to view them from a completely new and fresh perspective, free from bias and the contamination of personal feelings or emotions. A personal phenomenology diary was kept as well alongside writing and meditative processes as a way to keep track of memories, emotions and the progress of phenomenological reduction.

As we have already learned in Chapter 2, phenomenology and a phenomenological methodology can be difficult to define, and various interpretations and perspectives can greatly vary the type of phenomenology in question. Finlay states that researchers agree that the central concept concerning the focus of phenomenology is often sound, and debates and disagreements will often arise when the question of how to best execute phenomenological research in practice is discussed. There is clear confusion about how to conduct “appropriate” phenomenological research and therefore makes phenomenology in general very difficult for inexperienced beginners to access and understand. (Finlay, 2012, p. 17) Therefore this research paper strictly focuses on the criteria put forth by Linda Finlay in her paper concerning phenomenological methodologies, in order to provide clear criteria and boundaries. The personal phenomenological process attempted to stick to and follow this criteria of phenomenology, as well as the works of Husserl, while exploring the possibility of executing a phenomenological reduction based on personal experiences. Finlay defines phenomenological research methods in the following ways:

“phenomenological research is phenomenological when it involves both rich description of either the lifeworld or lived experience, and where the researcher has adopted a special, open phenomenological attitude which, at least initially, refrains from importing external frameworks and sets aside judgements about the realness of the phenomenon.” (Finlay, 2012, p. 19)

“Any research which does not have at its core the description of “the things in their appearing” which focuses experience as lived, cannot be considered phenomenological.” (Finlay, 2012, p. 20)

With these definitions in mind, it is important to explore whether the method of personal reduction
completed in this research can be said to be valid and justifiable as phenomenology. In regard to the personal process of bracketing attempted in this paper, Finlay's definitions can be said to justify the process of reflection undertaken to in fact be phenomenological in nature. A rich description of a lived experience was present throughout the entire process, that of the experiences of being a TCK. A new and eye-opening phenomenological perspective was adopted during this process, and a phenomenological reduction was executed. The very beginning of this phenomenological journey was challenging, however, over the course of a few months, it became easier to understand the goals behind phenomenology as a philosophy, and begin to view these experiences from a fresh perspective. These definitions also bring us back to MacKenzie et al. article concerning authenticity. As mentioned before, authenticity is an awareness of the self, and the attempt at understanding the true nature of the self. (MacKenzie, McShane & Wilcox, 2007, para. 10) All of the experiences explored in this research were observed through phenomenology, making the experiences authentic in nature, as they have been viewed through and meditated on with the help of phenomenology. The experiences explored are therefore valuable for the research, as they are authentic recollections about what it is like to be a TCK.

3.3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The research conducted in this paper is complex to analyze. Research done by a researcher about him/herself is unavoidably difficult to explain and for others to understand, as all method and conclusions took place within the mind of said researcher. Method, process and conclusions are difficult to explain clearly, due to the fact that the researcher is essentially attempting to explain his/her processes of thinking. Plenty of scrutiny unavoidably arises. Large error margins exist due to the inability to control various factors that could affect the legitimacy of the investigation. For example, all research is focused on experiences that have already happened, and memories dating back to childhood could be distorted and even false. There is no way to control or prevent this, which ultimately makes it impossible for the research to reach any absolute conclusions. The method of phenomenological reduction would need to be more rigorous and scientific in order to provide adequate results and more research needs to be done in order to fully understand the phenomenological reduction and how it can be performed. In the future while performing a reduction it would be helpful to keep track or record of how many times a meditation process takes place, and see if there is a clear line of progress that develops over time. However, it is difficult to state a concrete number of times that is needed in order to achieve a successful reduction, as each
person and each persons lived experiences are immensely different and personal. Furthermore, it would be very difficult to measure this progress, and only the researcher him/herself would be able to know if any progress has been achieved.

It is impossible to state without doubt that a successful phenomenological reduction was achieved, as analysis of the self by the self is undoubtedly biased. It is also difficult for any other researcher to truly know whether or not the phenomenological reduction was successful, as an insight into someone else's mind is difficult to attain. Furthermore, it is difficult to know whether or not a meditation process is “radical” enough. Honestly speaking this research concludes that a “proper” phenomenological reduction was most likely not achieved, as a radicalization in the belief system about the world can not be said to have occurred. However, the perspectives of the researcher concerning the experiences of childhood did change, and through the method of attempted reduction, a fresh phenomenological viewpoint and attitude was achieved and a deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon was reached. It is unclear whether or not a phenomenological reduction can be applied solely to one aspect of a person's life or identity, in this case the experiences of being a TCK, or if a phenomenological reduction process must always be a complete alteration of the entire individual. However, according to the research done in this paper, a phenomenological reduction is claimed to be valid if it is experienced as a life-altering change in perspective and beliefs. Nonetheless, plenty was learned about past experiences, how they have affected the researcher, how they could affect future research, and how this can be avoided. Constant vigilance, self-reflection and track needs to be kept when continuing research in the TCK field, and the reduction process should be continued throughout any and all research conducted on this topic.

It is impossible as a researcher to claim that any and all research performed in the future will be absolutely without bias due to the attempt at a phenomenological reduction. Nonetheless, this framework and ground laid by phenomenology will help future research move towards the ideal of unbiased and uncontaminated knowledge, so greatly coveted by Husserl. The attempt at achieving a phenomenological reduction provided new perspectives, and opened up the mind to new insights. In the attempt to separate myself from the experiences of childhood I was able to see these experiences from new perspectives, which provided fresh viewpoints as well as a more profound understanding of the phenomena behind these experiences.

In regard to phenomenology, it is without question simpler to accept things as they are, and never
reflect or question or attempt to change one's perspective and view; however, personally I believe that being unaware and unable to change things is still preferable to ignorance, and phenomenology presents a solution that is challenging but nonetheless important to consider. Moving through the world without ever questioning the foundations of knowledge and one's belief's can be considered a completely blind and blissful existence. However, even if there is no fix, no way to repair the idea that everything we know to be true is in fact contaminated, it is nonetheless preferable to be aware of these ideas, in hope of moving towards a solution. Although it is unclear whether a phenomenological reduction can ever be successfully performed, it is nonetheless a helpful step in the right direction.

In regard to the authenticity discussed in Chapter 2.2.4, as authenticity and performativity can become issues within the academic field, phenomenology and a phenomenological reduction could be an excellent way to help move towards a level of authenticity that would be present within any and all research. Looking into one's identity, who you are, what motivates you and seeing one's ego from a different perspective, helps fight the pressures of performativity. Meditating on what your purpose is in life and in academia, what it is you truly wish to do and achieve regardless of cultural or social pressures and expectations, will not only help produce authentic work, but is also extremely important on a very personal level. Becoming aware of one's ethics, values and beliefs and being able to separate oneself from them and view them as what they are, is a personal journey that I believe is important not only for academia, but for the entirety of a person's being. Performing a phenomenological reduction was extremely challenging and often times even frustrating. However, it is an experience that I will continue to pursue due to the revelations and clarity it has provided throughout this journey. It is very easy to become caught up in the everyday pressures of life, academics, work etc. and forget to reflect upon one's self. Who you are as a person, what you believe, what you value and what your ethics are, influence everything that you do, including academic work. It has been liberating to become aware of the authentic self, and recognize that self as something different, something or someone who is free from the performative social or cultural pressures that so easily influence us. Performing a phenomenological reduction and exploring the self is a process that I will continue to execute throughout life, both personally and professionally.

Phenomenological methodology will aid this research in the future, when the attempt to understand TCK experiences arises. Even if a complete and radical reduction is unsuccessful, the knowledge gained concerning phenomenology will nonetheless aid in providing conclusions that are attempting to be as far away from bias and contamination as possible. The mind of the researcher has been
greatly expanded by the research done on phenomenology, and this new perspective will help with all future research. Keeping in mind that a phenomenological reduction must be continued and developed throughout one's life, any future research done will be executed alongside attempts at continuing and improving the phenomenological reduction process as well. Future research concerning the life-worlds of TCK's will be easier to approach due to the attempted personal reduction process.
4. CONCLUSION

Overall this investigation into the possibility of a personal phenomenological reduction was a challenging and interesting journey. Throughout this research the challenging issue of being a researcher and simultaneously being the object of research was tackled with the help of phenomenology. This method was not easy to master, as issues of subjectivity and objectivity would arise and present challenges of their own. However, with the help of phenomenology and the phenomenological reduction the research attempted to find a method that could nonetheless help the researcher to become aware of personal experiences.

Exploring phenomenology and attempting to perform a phenomenological reduction will be very useful for future research concerning other TCK's. Beginning to understand one's own life-world and how it has shaped and affected identity and decisions, will provide a useful base of comparison and insight when exploring the experiences of other TCK's. With the help of self-reflection, comparison with other TCK experiences, linking concepts and ideas using mind-maps, meditating and keeping a personal account of the reduction process, a lot was learned about how to separate oneself as a researcher from a topic of research as well as strive towards authenticity. Although a complete reduction was not achieved during this research process, the attempt nonetheless expanded the mind and perspectives of the researcher and will help in future research. All knowledge gained throughout this research is undoubtedly subjective however, is absolutely essential in order to become aware of the experiences of being a TCK which will in turn aid future research. Becoming aware of personal experiences with the help of phenomenology will aid in viewing and understanding the experiences of other TCK's as well. When future TCK research is conducted, the knowledge gained by the researcher about personal experiences with the help of phenomenology, will act as a foundation for this research.

Further research at a Master's Thesis level will explore the life-world's of TCK's, the similarities and differences that can be observed, and how these experiences affect lives both personally and academically. Phenomenology will be used as the foundation for research, when exploring and analysing TCK experiences. How do TCK life-world's compare across the world, and what do these experiences have in common?
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Appendix. 1

THE TCK LIFE-WORLD
Appendix 2

IDENTITY

"Some people may identify themselves with many collectivities causing contrast and inner conflicts but there are also situations in which all collective identities remain very much in the background and do not play a remarkable role in social, political or economic life." (Ruokanen, 2004, p. 14)

"When we approach culture as group character or identity, it is essential to recognize that each group is made up of a multitude of individuals and voices and each individual has a range of group identities." (Mary Jane Collier 2000, as cited in Ruokanen, 2004, p. 9)

"Third-culture kids typically feel comfortable as outsiders and see themselves as global citizens."

"If parents, teachers, society and peers all play a part in validating the child’s identity and self-constrasts, these validators may change and communicate different values each time there is a crosscultural move, and the child’s identity will be very different therefore from someone who grows up in a homogeneous society." (Fall, Thompson & Walker, 2004, p. 324)

Personal Memories

Research

Identity

Questions and Ideas

- Personally identify as Finnish but also as a TCX
- I feel at home easily, and enjoy change, am adventurous
- Being from a different background is a large part of my identity, and would be very different without it
- Sometimes do not recognize myself in Finland
- Always felt very Finnish while living abroad, and less so when moving to Finland
- Small identity crisis have occurred throughout adolescence and even adult
- What process takes place in identity formation?
- Is identity something fixed, or is it always changing/growing?
- How many different identities can a person have?
- What happens to identity when more than one culture/language is present?
- Does identity change in different situations and environments?
Appendix 3

HOME AND BELONGING

“Cultural hybrids profess never to feel ‘at home’ except with others who have the same type of lived experience” (Greenholz & Kim, 2009, p. 392)

“Gleason (1970) examined where TCs felt most at home. One third to one half of all his respondents cited more than one country. Some say TCs are at home everywhere and nowhere.” (Fall, Thompson & Walker, 2004, p. 321)

“Fall (1995) asked respondents to rate their sense of belonging to a country, place, community or in terms of a relationship on a Likert scale. She found that people’s sense of belonging was three times stronger to relationships than to a particular country. (Fall, Thompson & Walker, 2004, p. 321)

“Pollock and Van Reken (1999) described TCs’ experience of incomplete relatedness to multiple cultures, along with a sense of belonging to a TC cultural group rather than to (parental) home or host cultures.” (Hoenting & Jenkins, 2010, p. 20)

“Furthermore, a strong group identification helps maintain an individual’s sense of belonging. Repeated cross-cultural moves at a young age may have consequences for development of cultural identity.” (Hoenting & Jenkins, 2010, p. 18)

I have always felt that Finland is my “home country”, this is how it has always been referred to.

Thailand is my childhood home, where I made friends and felt that I belonged.

Today, home is where my family is, regardless of location.

How is “home” defined?
How does the word shape who you are as a person?
Does it mean the same thing to everyone?
Is it a clear cut concept?
What is a “home country”?
What makes a person feel at home?
Appendix 4

EXPLORING SCHOOL AND TEACHERS

"As we delved further into Lena’s experiences of cultural differences through the interview process it became harder to ignore the idea that for Lena, and probably for many other ATCKs, experience of cultural difference came within a TCK milieu. Although they were surrounded with representatives of many other cultural heritages, which provided a patina of crosscultural interaction, the shared features of their upbringing – children of expatriates, attending international schools – actually created an environment that fostered a Minimization orientation; despite our superficial differences we are fundamentally the same." (Greenholz & Kim. 2009. p. 397)

"Multicultural education tries to create equal educational opportunities for all students by changing the total school environment so that it will reflect the diverse cultures and groups within a society and within the nation’s classrooms." (L.J. 2013. p. 24)

"As Bell and Griffin (1997) stated, programs concerned with diversity focus on ‘helping students describe and understand their own experiences as members of 26 different social groups and listen to others talk about their experiences and perspectives. The focus is on respecting, understanding, and acknowledging difference.’ “ (L.J. 2013. p. 25-26)

Personally school was always very important when moving, provided a base and a familiar environment.

School made everything feel normal again and provided routine.

I knew what was expected of me at school and that provided comfort.

Teachers were often very helpful and welcoming, and students from so many different backgrounds helped me feel I belonged.

Friends

How can International schools facilitate TCK adjustments and mobility?

How can schools back “home” handle re-entry of TCK’s?

What can teachers do?

What is important at school for a TCK? Friends, belonging, social status etc.?

How does attending international Schools affect you as a person? Positives vs. Negatives

Research

Personal Memories

Questions and Ideas

School and Teachers