



Editorial

by **Christopher R. Stones**
Editor-in-Chief

The final edition for 2011 is a relatively short volume comprising four papers and two book reviews. Whereas there is no obvious common thread linking each of the academic papers, by contrast the book reviews, commissioned independently of one another, each have a direct bearing on the nature of qualitative research within the phenomenological and human sciences approach aimed at better understanding what it means to be human.

Volume 11, edition 2, opens with a paper “Childhood as a Mirror of Culture” by Willem Koops, a Dutch developmental psychologist, which was inspired by the ideas put forward by Jan Van den Berg regarding the changing nature of our understanding of childhood and how, in turn, the very nature of childhood itself changes over time. Koops argues that since our normative understandings of childhood are shaped by the specific cultural context of the time, it becomes possible to understand the changing concept of childhood through, for instance, observing the representation of children in historical paintings. Following a predominantly metaleptic approach (the “psychology of historical change”) in his paper, Koops shows how childhood itself is not a fixed concept but is closely intertwined with changing cultural thrusts so that, to this extent, the psychological relationship between adult and child is culturally determined in a very real and meaningful way. Moreover, argues Koops, the psychological existence of the child has changed over time so that it is not appropriate to assume that current understandings of childhood reality can be used to understand the likely nature of childhood and adult-child relationships in previous eras, especially from a psychological point of view.

The second paper in this edition (by Joanne Mayoh, Les Todres and Carol Bond) examines the experience of using an increasingly important information-seeking medium, that of the internet, in the lives of older adults living with chronic health conditions. Using a descriptive phenomenological approach, their paper, “Exploring the Online Health Information Seeking Experiences of Older Adults”, presents rich experiential descriptions that have the potential to contribute to healthcare practice in the United Kingdom by providing healthcare professionals with an understanding of patient online experience which, in turn, could help them identify patients’ needs and thus improve care in terms of the quality of empathy and understanding of older adults with chronic health conditions. These findings are especially significant since there is the general perception that this older population-cohort tends not to use the internet whereas this is far from the case.

The next paper reports on men’s experience of bereavement, particularly the meaning of such an experience. Ole Spaten, Mia Byrialsen and Darren Langdrige, in their paper “Men’s Grief, Meaning and Growth: A Phenomenological Investigation into the Experience of Loss”, look specifically at how the loss of a spouse influences the men’s experience of meaning, grief and loss. Three men, ranging in age from the early thirties to early fifties, all of whom had lost their partners to cancer, were interviewed using an open-ended dialogue, the content of which was interrogated using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Three key themes were uncovered, these being ‘grief and self-reflection’, the ‘meaning and purpose of life’ and the ‘challenge of reconfiguring one’s lifeworld’. The authors discuss these themes in

the light of broader existential concerns and the current literature pertaining to bereavement.

The final research offering is concerned with an innovative mind-body practice, “Mindful Body Awareness”, which combines manual and verbal process-interventions as a means of facilitating body awareness. In their paper entitled “Perceived Helpfulness and Unfolding Processes in Body-Oriented Therapy Practice”, Cynthia Price, Kevin Krycka, Tara Breitenbucher, and Naoko Brown emphasize that this body-oriented therapy is distinguished from other contemporary treatment modalities in that it combines manual therapy with verbal processing to enhance body awareness. Their study was designed to gather immediate post-session data in order to more closely examine the lived experience of ‘Mindful Body Awareness’ and to be reflective of the participants’ lifeworlds.

Based on the results of this study, Price and her colleagues suggest that this new approach to body therapy, with its focus on felt-sense and its articulation, facilitates a deeper understanding of the self as being whole and sentient. Moreover, the

findings provide a guide as to how aspects of ‘Mindful Body Awareness’ may facilitate an increased sense of self as a result of the integration of interoceptive awareness with an awareness of self in the world.

The final two papers in this edition are comprehensive reviews of books that directly and indirectly provide elegant commentary on the scope and nature of research within the human sciences tradition.

The first review, by Kate Galvin, comments on “Phenomenology and Human Science Research Today”, while the second review, by Peter Ashworth, deals with what is essentially a book on qualitative methodology and is entitled “Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis”.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this material – as I hope you will. I felt inspired – as I hope you will. I came away enriched – as I hope you will.

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About the Author



Professor Christopher Stones, previously of Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa and currently Professor of Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg, has enjoyed a lengthy academic and research career, in the course of which he has taught in the areas of physiological, clinical, forensic, social, and research psychology. He is Vice-President of the South African Association for Psychotherapy and past Chairman of the South African Society for Clinical Psychology. Editor-in-Chief of the *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* since 2003, he is also on the editorial panels of two other online journals. Using both natural scientific quantitative methodologies and phenomenological approaches, Professor Stones’s research interests are in the areas of identity, attitudes and attitude change, phenomenological praxis and methodologies, abnormal psychology and psychotherapy, spirituality and religious experience, in all of which areas he has published extensively. An Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, with which he is also registered as a Chartered Psychologist, Professor Stones is registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa as both a research and a clinical psychologist, and conducts a part-time clinical practice with particular focus on adolescents, young adults and families, as well as offering long-term psychotherapy. In addition, he is regularly called on to serve as an “expert witness” in medico-legal (civil and criminal) court proceedings, and to contribute as a consultant in the field of forensic investigation.

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