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Phenomenology and adapted physical activity: Philosophy and professional practice  
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#### Abstract

Through the increased use of qualitative research methods, the term *phenomenology* has become a quite familiar notion for researchers in adapted physical activity (APA). In contrast to this increasing interest in phenomenology as methodology, relatively little work has focused on phenomenology as philosophy or as an approach to professional practice. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to examine the relevance of phenomenology as philosophy and as pedagogy to the field of APA. First, phenomenology as philosophy is introduced through three key notions, namely the first-person perspective, embodiment and life-world. The relevance of these terms to APA is then outlined. Second, the concept of phenomenological pedagogy is introduced, and its application and potential for APA are discussed. In conclusion, it is argued that phenomenology can help theorize ways of understanding human difference in movement contexts and form a basis of action-oriented research aiming at developing professional practice.

*Key words:* Phenomenology, philosophy, professional practice, pedagogy

Phenomenology and adapted physical activity: Philosophy and professional practice.

At the turn of the century, Reid (2000) identified philosophical debate as one of the future trends for inquiry in adapted physical activity (APA). He stated that philosophical inquiry would be helpful in the formulation of research questions and the inquiry into answers to these questions. In particular, Reid pointed to ethics as especially relevant. In the last few years, we have seen a small, but growing number, of papers on ethics appear in the field of APA (e.g. Burkett, McNamee & Potthas, 2011; Goodwin, 2008; Goodwin & Rossow-Kimball, 2012; Silva & Howe, 2012), however this article takes a different approach by examining the application of phenomenology – a strand of continental philosophy – to the field of APA.

Through the increased use and acceptance of qualitative research methods, the terms *phenomenology* and *phenomenological* have become, if not household terms, then at least quite familiar notions for researchers in APA. An early contribution to phenomenology in APA was provided by Connolly (1994) who examined the experiences of pre-service physical education (PE) teachers in an adapted physical education (APE) program. Since then, a growing number of studies have investigated the experiences of different groups of people in a variety of APA related contexts, including PE (e.g. An & Goodwin, 2007; Fitzpatrick & Watkinson, 2003; Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000; Goodwin, 2001; Hodge, Tannehill, & Kluge, 2003), summer camps (Goodwin & Staples, 2005; Goodwin, Lieberman, Johnston, & Leo, 2011), rehabilitation (Standal & Jespersen, 2008), and different sport settings (Goodwin et al., 2009; Goodwin, Fitzpatrick, Thurmeier, & Hall, 2006; Kasser, 2009). The experiences of participating in specific activities such as quad rugby (Goodwin et al., 2009), dance (Bjorbækmo & Engelsrud, 2011; Goodwin, Krohn & Kuhnle, 2004), and play (Jonzon & Goodwin, 2012) have also been investigated. Finally, studies with a phenomenological approach have looked into specific phenomena such as help (Goodwin, 2001), physical awkwardness (Fitzpatrick & Watkinson, 2003) and choice (Morphy & Goodwin, 2012) in the PE context, and metaphors of disability (Goodwin, Thurmeier, & Gustafson, 2004), amputation (Sousa, Corredeira, & Ana, 2009) and skill learning in the rehabilitation context (Standal & Jespersen, 2008).

In contrast to this increasing interest in phenomenology as methodology, relatively little work has focused on phenomenology as philosophy or as an approach to professional practice. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to examine how phenomenology can be relevant to APA beyond phenomenological, qualitative research. More specifically, I intend to examine the relevance of phenomenology as philosophy and as pedagogy. Whereas the former – I will argue – provides valuable insight and understanding into some of the fundamental assumptions of APA, the latter highlights the contribution of phenomenology to professional practice of APA.

### **Phenomenology as Philosophy**

The aim of this section is to argue for the relevance that phenomenological philosophy can have for APA specifically, and in order to do so, an understanding of what is meant by both APA and phenomenology is needed. With regard to APA, I take Greg Reid's (2003) definition as a starting point and consider APA as a "cross-disciplinary body of knowledge and practice that enable professionals to interact with people experiencing difficulties with movement" (p. 20). This definition points out the cross-disciplinary nature of our field of study. A debate has existed in APA between scholars, such as Reid, who see APA as a field of study that can be investigated from different disciplinary perspectives, and others who see APA as a discipline (or at least an emerging discipline) in its own right (see Sherrill & Hutzler, 2007). I follow Reid and take the stand point that APA is not a discipline, but a field

of study that should be investigated from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. The cross-disciplinary status of APA opens up for including the discipline of philosophy into the range of theories and methodologies that can inform and guide researchers as well as professionals in this field of study. Though I acknowledge that there are other, more detailed, definitions of APA, Reid's (2003) definition is useful for the present purpose because it states that the knowledge base should contribute to a professional practice and that APA is not necessarily directed at people with disabilities. Rather, he uses – as quoted above – the notion “people who experience difficulties with movement” (Reid, 2003, p. 20). The experiential aspect of movement difficulties can, as I hope to show, be elucidated with the aid of phenomenology.

Phenomenology is often referred to as a movement in the history of philosophy that originated in Germany at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Moran, 2005). The term ‘movement’ signals that phenomenology is not a school of philosophy committed to a particular set of doctrines, but rather, it has developed into various directions, such as realistic, constitutive, existential and hermeneutical phenomenology (Embree, 1997). Also, it has been applied to various other disciplines such as sociology and psychology. Despite the many off-springs of phenomenology, the movement still “shares certain methodological commitments as well as closely related ideas about the proper domain of phenomenological research” (Luft & Overgaard, 2012, p. 1).

Central to most variants of phenomenological philosophy is that they investigate experiences as they are presented to the subjects who are having the experiences (Romdenh-Romluc 2011). In a little more detail, Merleau-Ponty (2002) held that phenomenology offers an account of space, time and the world as we ‘live’ them. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide (p. vii).

This definition underscores the importance assigned by phenomenology to describing the *what it is like* of experiences rather than trying to explain the origin or cause of the subject's experience.

The centrality of experience is also one of the arguments for why phenomenology is relevant for APA. If a purpose of APA is to enable professionals to interact with people experiencing difficulties of movement, then knowledge about what it is like to have such experiences is important. Thus, understanding the first-person perspective is relevant. Furthermore, “difficulties with movement” needs to be understood, and a phenomenological contribution would be to describe these experiences with reference to embodiment (Hughes & Paterson, 1997; Paterson & Hughes, 1999). Drawing on the phenomenological account of embodiment is particularly relevant for the present purpose, due to the intimate relationship between embodiment and movement, which is highlighted most notably in the work of Merleau-Ponty (2002). Finally, these experiences always find their meaning in a given situation. Phenomenology's contribution on this topic is the elucidation of the lifeworld, i.e., how APA professionals and participants *live* the situation they are in. Therefore, even if phenomenology as a philosophy has developed an array of concepts, I will, in the following, describe in more detail three of them, namely *the first-person perspective*, *embodiment*, and *the life-world*, because they serve the purpose of linking phenomenology as philosophy with APA. This is not to say that these are the only three relevant concepts, but my argument is that these concepts are of central relevance given the definition of APA from which I work.

### **The First-person Perspective**

The first-person perspective is one of the features that distinguishes phenomenology from those third-person sciences that aim to eliminate the influence of human subjectivity. The

first-person perspective is crucial because the appearance of any phenomenon or object always is “the appearance *of something for somebody*” (Zahavi, 2003, p. 17). Thus, phenomenology provides an alternative to the objectivist account given by third-person sciences. One might ask, however, if this doesn’t lead to the objection that phenomenology is merely subjective and without any scientific merit? The response to this is that phenomenology was established as critique of the *naïve* objectivism of the third-person sciences, where it is assumed that it is possible to reach conclusions in inquiries that are independent of any human viewpoint, i.e. that objectivity is equivalent to a view from nowhere (Nagel, 1986).

Phenomenologists would argue that sciences are possible because scientists first of all are human beings-in-the-world. That is, there can never be an absolute objectivity, because research is a human enterprise where questions are asked and answered by human subjects. Phenomenologists would further hold that there is “just as much ‘objectivity’ and truth in the subjective access to the world once it is *articulated* and *intersubjectively confirmed*” (Luft & Overgaard, 2012, p. 10. Italics in original). The notion of intersubjectivity in phenomenology means that a fundamental aspect of being a subject is that we are inter-subjects (Crossley, 1996), i.e. that our existence is relational. Therefore, the objectivity of phenomenological descriptions requires that such descriptions must be of a character that allows the reader to get a felt sense of the experience. In other words, the description of the experience becomes validated as an experience that others could plausibly have. Thus, it is important to point out that phenomenology provides an account of subjective experience, and not a subjective account of experience (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008). This distinction is crucial!

The difference between first- and third person perspectives in relation to APA can be exemplified with the work of S. Kay Toombs (1992; 2001), a philosopher living with Multiple Sclerosis. In *The meaning of illness*, Toombs (1992) investigates the different perspectives of doctor and patient, and argues that it is not primarily different levels of knowledge that makes these perspectives different. Rather, the difference is grounded at a more basic level, namely in the difference between meanings as constituted in direct, lived experience (the first person perspective of the patient) and through scientific knowledge of disease states (the third-person perspective of the doctor). Her analysis “underscores the philosophical importance of the difference between meaning which is grounded in lived experience and meaning which represents abstractions from lived experience.... Illness in its complexity cannot be reduced to its conception as a pathoanatomical and pathophysiological fact” (p. 42). Toombs’ point is to show how illness is constituted in the experience of the patient and how this experience is radically different from the doctors’ scientific apprehension of the patients’ illnesses.

This is directly analogous to APA where we can suspect that most of its practitioners and researchers are persons who lack the experience of having a disability. In Toombs’ analysis, the non-disabled practitioners’ understanding is based in scientific, third-person, knowledge about disability, i.e. derived from theories and text books. This is a radically different perspective from the first-person perspective of the people we meet in our professional practice. Although Toombs has been criticized for painting a too black and white picture of the almost insurmountable differences in perspective between patient and doctor (Svenaesus, 2000), her work is relevant for APA because it illustrates the difference in perspective on disability that arises when non-disabled professionals, who perhaps never have had any kind of movement difficulties, interact with people who are experiencing such difficulties. (This is to say that I work from an assumption that students of APA more often than not belong to the motor elite, a group of people who have enjoyed success in sport and PE). This is not to deny any value in third-person, scientific accounts of disability, but it is to say that this knowledge

does not exhaust the analysis of what disability and movement difficulties (or for that matter any other human experience) are (Nagel, 1974).

### **Embodiment**

In many disciplines like the cognitive sciences, sociology and philosophy embodiment has become a key concept. Cheville (2005) argues that one of the reasons for this is that the concept serves as a means for overcoming the problems of mind-body dualism. The mind-body dualism claims that mind and body are two separate entities, and that whereas the body is an object like any other natural object, the mind is what makes us human. It is beyond the scope of this article to go into either the historical origin or the consequences of the dualistic understanding of the body (but see, for instance, Leder, 1990). The phenomenological stand point is that we not only *have a body*, but we also *are our bodies* in an existential sense (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). By stating that we both have and are our bodies, embodiment implies that the body is not merely an object, as studied in anatomy and physiology, for instance, but the body is also our subjective perspective on the world.

Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1996) distinguish between three dimensions of embodiment. The first is the facts of our embodiment, i.e. that human beings have hands, heads that we can turn, eyes in the front and not the back of our heads and so on. On the one hand, this might seem like a normative claim about the universality of what a normal body looks like. Therefore, it is important to point out that one crucial fact of our embodiment is the open possibility for variation and difference in bodies. For instance, not having arms is a possible fact of human embodiment. On the other hand, it might also seem trivial, but it is indeed due to our bodily constitution that objects in the world appear the way they do for us. Because we have the bodies that we have, mountains appear to be large and flying is impossible. The world would look very different for us had we had only one eye placed in the back of our necks.

Second, it is a universal feature of embodiment that human beings can develop skills, habits and dispositions. Through socialization and learning we can refine our embodiment, and in so doing we come to experience the world differently. In addition, our embodiment is also changed in instances of illness, injury or acquiring impairments, as the following quote from Toombs illustrates.

Locomotion opens up space, allowing one freely to change position and move towards objects in the world. Loss of mobility anchors one in the Here, engendering a heightened sense of distance between oneself and surrounding things.... Loss of mobility illustrates in a concrete way that the subjective experience of space is intimately related both to one's bodily capacities and to the design of the surrounding world (Toombs, 2001, p. 249).

The point here, which is highly relevant for APA, is that a person's embodied capacities for movement are intimately related to the person's experiences of the surrounding world. It also illustrates that embodiment does not stop at the outer limits of the physical body, but ties together body and world. The experience of a movement difficulty, nicely captured in this quote, is therefore always relational. It is not caused by characteristics of the individual. For APA, this means that capacities, abilities or movement difficulties are relational phenomena that are produced in an interchange between the person and the environment he or she is acting in.

The third aspect of embodiment described by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1996) is that it has a cultural dimension. Our bodies become cultivated, for instance, in the way that there are certain gestures that are meaningful in one culture, but rude or meaningless in other cultures.

An example of embodiment as a social process is presented in Howe's (2008) monograph on the cultural politics of the Paralympic Games, in which he used theories of embodiment to understand the experiences of training and competition for Paralympic athletes. Howe concludes that what makes Paralympic athlete communities distinct is "bodily imperfection" (p. 119) because the repetitive training and competition involved in being a Paralympic athlete are experienced in and through the body as a "less than able" embodiment. Following this perspective would, as Paterson and Hughes (1999) have argued in a different context, facilitate the scholarly task of illustrating that the impaired body has a history and is as much a cultural phenomenon as it is a biological entity. It would offer disability studies [and in our case APA] the opportunity to formulate theories of culture, self and experience, with the body at the centre of its analysis (p. 600).

### **The Life-world**

As with many of the key concepts in phenomenology, life-world was introduced by Husserl and later developed by other philosophers. Life-world has come to denote the world of immediate experience, i.e. the pre-reflective world with which we are intimately familiar (Bengtsson, 1999). A crucial distinction in the phenomenological literature is that between the natural and the phenomenological attitude, whereas the natural attitude is characterized by the unquestioned acceptance of the realities of the life-world, and the phenomenological attitude involves the bracketing of those beliefs taken for granted in the life-world. Stating that the life-world is pre-reflective indicates that we do not reflect on why situations and things are as they are.

Martin Heidegger, who used the notion being-in-the-world instead of life-world, famously illustrated the primordially of the life-world by the activity of hammering. The hammer is first and foremost understood through hammering, not through observing its different parts. It is in use that the hammer is given meaning through a series of 'in-order-to' relationships: the hammer is used in order to strike a nail, in order to build a house, in order to get shelter from the rain (Dreyfus, 1991). The point with hammering is that it shows that practical action is what characterizes human being's most fundamental relation to the world. In APA contexts, a similar point can be about equipment, such as the tennis racket, and assistive devices, such as the wheelchair, where the equipment becomes habitually incorporated into the embodied performance of skills (Standal, 2011).

It may seem trivial that the equipment attains its meaning through use rather than through inspection of its different parts. But for phenomenologists this is not a trivial point, because it is an ontological question of significance in the sense that it shows what kind of beings human beings are. Practical, tacit and pre-reflective engagements with the world are definitional for human beings' life-worlds. In relation to APA, one can argue that movement difficulties are expressions of the breakdown situations that occur when people's practical engagement in the life-world is disrupted. In their analysis of the experience of physical awkwardness in PE, Fitzpatrick and Watkinson (2003) found that failure to perform normative sport skills was an essential aspect of that experience. Participating, but failing, in physical activity was experienced as a disruption that made the participants self-aware in a negative sense.

The experiences of disruptions can be further illuminated by certain existential features of the life-world, known as *existentials* (Bengtsson, 1999; van Manen, 1990). van Manen (1990) has identified four existentials of relevance for the present purpose: lived body, lived space, lived time, and lived human relations that "can be differentiated but not separated. They all form an intricate unity which we call the lifeworld" (p. 105). Just as the lived body (embodiment) is how the body is experienced by someone, lived space and time are not objective units that can be measured in meters or hours. An hour in PE is experienced

differently by a student who loves the subject compared to a student who dislikes it. Whereas for the former, the lesson ends almost before it has begun, the latter might have the experience that the duration of the lesson is extraordinary long. Similarly, in objective terms, the size of the gymnasium is the same for everyone, but the 40 meters from one end to the other are very different for different students. This is illustrated in the quote above from Toombs (2001), where her experience of moving from here to there is characterized by a heightened sense of distance. In addition, both Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) and Fitzpatrick and Watkinson (2003) have shown how the stark openness of the gymnasium is experienced as threatening by pupils with disabilities. Finally, the *existential* called lived relationality, which involves the lived experiences of relations to other people, can be lived as both positive and negative in relation to movement: positive in the sense of being seen as competent (Arnold, 1979) or negative in the sense of having to publicly display one's ineptness to perform culturally normative movement skills (Fitzpatrick & Watkinson, 2003). The point here is that the life-world existentials can provide us with tools for reflection on concrete life-world experiences of movement difficulties.

### **Phenomenology as Pedagogy**

While the previous section outlined three concepts from phenomenological philosophy and illustrated their application to APA, this section will deal with phenomenological pedagogy. As mentioned in the introduction, there are several phenomenologically oriented studies in the field of APA. Part of the rationale for conducting this kind of research is to honor the experiences of APA participants in order to understand how movement and movement contexts are experienced by the participants (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2001). However, as Goodwin (2009) has pointed out, listening to the voices of the research participants is not enough if we – as professionals – return to our everyday APA practice unchallenged by these voices and experiences. The challenge, she stated, “is to create learning environments that honor the disability experience” (p. 67). I suggest that the transferability of qualitative, phenomenological research evidence can be assisted with the development of phenomenological pedagogy in the APA domain.

### **van Manen's Phenomenological Pedagogy**

Phenomenology as pedagogy was developed by Max van Manen, in particular through his book, *The tact of teaching: the meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness* (van Manen, 1993). The key notion in van Manen's phenomenological pedagogy is *tact*, which has three central meanings. First, the etymology of the word – i.e. a sense of touch or feeling – suggests that tact has something to do with touching or being in touch, for instance as it is found in the word tactile. Second, tact is used in music to describe the orchestration of several instruments, and third, it connotes the ability to handle delicate situations in a careful way. In these senses, the tact of teaching is a description of the ability of good pedagogues to be in touch with the teaching situation, being able to find the rhythm of the students, and to create learning situations in tactful ways. Summing up, tact is:

*to see* a situation calling for sensitivity, *to understand* the meaning of what is seen, *to sense* the significance of this situation, *to know* how and what *to do*, and to actually do something right (van Manen, 1993, p. 132. Italics added).

From the verbs in the quote, it is clear that tact is unfolded through acts, i.e. it is an ability to interact with others.



In his later works, van Manen takes on a broader perspective and is concerned not only with pedagogy, but with a phenomenological practice more generally (van Manen, 2001; 2007). Phenomenological practice is characterized by a context-sensitive, inquiry-oriented approach to “issues and concerns that arise in the lifeworld of professional practitioners” (van Manen, 2001, p. 459). Despite the broadening of perspective, the essence of phenomenological pedagogy from his earlier works remains intact, so to speak.

At the heart of van Manen’s phenomenological pedagogy is a critique of theoretical and technical rationalities applied to pedagogical and other professional practices in which professionals interact with participants (to use a generic term for learners, students, patients, clients and so on). As opposed to a technical approach to professional practice, phenomenological pedagogy does not provide recipes for practice. By technical approach, van Manen means “an attitude of accountability and human engineering... [where] the predominant concern of educational practice has become an instrumental preoccupation with techniques, control, and with means-ends criteria of efficiency and effectiveness” (van Manen, 1997, p. 209). Phenomenological pedagogy, is therefore not something you can do anything with, it rather *does* something to you as a practitioner (van Manen, 2007). The practical value of phenomenology is that it affects the pedagogical sensitivity of the practitioner, and as such can lead us to a more insightful understanding of pedagogy and the tactful involvement with others. Thus, phenomenological pedagogy highlights the responsibility of the pedagogue to understand the participant’s life-world in order to act tactfully. As such, it concerns the question of *how* to deal with others in professional settings.

### **Phenomenology as Pedagogy in APA**

Tinning (2010) observes that in the wider context of human movement studies, there is little work done on phenomenological pedagogy. This is also the case in APA. An assumption in much of the qualitative research in APA is that studying and learning about the experiences of people with disabilities in various movement settings can develop a pedagogical sensitivity in students and practitioners. Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) express the assumption in this manner:

Teachers and instructors continue to assume that their view of the world is the students' view of the world and that they understand and know the needs and interests of their students. Including the voice of students with disabilities in our research agendas will deepen our understanding of disability and assist us in identifying barriers that are most meaningful to students (p. 145).

This is both plausible and very much in the spirit of phenomenological pedagogy, but whether and how reading and learning about participants’ experiences can enhance (future) practitioners’ sensitivity and improve their practice remains to be investigated empirically (see Goodwin, Lieberman, Johnston, & Leo, 2011 for a similar argument). To my knowledge, few steps are taken toward more action-oriented research that aims to change practice on the basis of a phenomenological pedagogy. By action-oriented research, I mean knowledge production in the form of, for instance, (participatory) action research and other forms of research that aims at transformation at the level of practical work. An exception to this is the work of Maureen Connolly (1995; 2008), who has utilized the life-world existentials mentioned above (i.e. embodiment, lived time, space and relationality) to understand experiences in movement contexts of persons with disabilities (Connolly, 1995). Furthermore, she has designed a curriculum based on phenomenology for movement education for persons

with autism (Connolly, 2008). For Connolly, the phenomenological approach creates sensitivity towards the highly different experiences of persons with autism:

Working semiotically and phenomenologically has allowed me to ask questions such as: If I cannot feel my skin as a boundary between me and the world, what might I do to create some awareness of that boundary? ... What surfaces or textures might be more soothing? ... If I am working from the premise that the lived body is the site of meaning-making, then many behaviours associated with ASD [autism-spectrum disorder] can be seen as embodied solutions to existential, neurological, sensory or motor trauma or crisis rather than outbursts of deliberate deviance (Connolly, 2008, p. 243).

In this way, Connolly exemplifies how a phenomenological pedagogy can be applied to APA by attending to the lived experiences of the participants and taking them as a starting point for one's pedagogical practice.

The phenomenological pedagogy developed by van Manen (1993) is mainly directed at the teachers' sensitivity towards the lived experiences of the participants. What seem to be given less attention in his work are pedagogical strategies to enhance participants' understanding of themselves as moving human beings. A further development of phenomenological pedagogy in APA could be work to enhance the participants' own experiences on questions like: What are my capabilities? What are my limits? How does it feel to be exhausted? What are my interests? These experiences can benefit from being raised into reflective awareness. An interesting study in this regard is the research by Bjorbækmo and Engelsrud (2011) who found that movement improvisation offered the participants opportunities to explore personal ways of moving. Being given the freedom to explore one's own potentiality for movement is rare for children with disabilities who are more accustomed to being subjected to standardized tests and rather rigid motor training programs. As Bjorbækmo and Engelsrud point out, such programs are to a limited degree informed by the participants' perspectives and experiences. Phenomenology is therefore not only a body of philosophical knowledge, but it also creates a foundation on which pedagogical practices can be developed, i.e. it answers to the question of how to do phenomenology in a practical setting.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The purpose of this article has been to examine how phenomenology can be of relevance for APA beyond phenomenologically oriented, qualitative research. This purpose has been realized by introducing and elaborating phenomenology as philosophy and as pedagogy. More specifically, I have outlined three concepts from phenomenological philosophy, namely the first-person perspective, embodiment, and life-world. These concepts were illustrated with examples that are relevant to APA. In relation to APA as a professional practice, I have introduced van Manen's (1993) ideas of phenomenology as pedagogy. This approach emphasises the context-sensitive understanding of the participants' lived experience as a basis for professional practice. I have tried to show the relevance of phenomenology as pedagogy to APA with reference to the work of Maureen Connolly (2008), but I have also argued that this area can be developed in the direction of emphasizing the participants' self-reflections as a valuable source of learning.

A growing interest in qualitative research with a phenomenological orientation can be observed in the field of APA. For those who are interested in phenomenology, this development is encouraging. While some of the studies that utilize this methodology were referred to in the introduction, a complete review of this literature is beyond the scope of this

paper. Therefore, a suggestion for future research is to review the existing literature in order to investigate both the methodological practice of phenomenological research in APA as well as what kind of contributions the findings in this literature make to knowledge base of APA.

While it is clear that the most common approach to phenomenology in APA is as a form of qualitative research, a contribution that this article makes is to provide a more differentiated understanding of what phenomenology can be. Indeed, I have followed Reid in arguing that we should understand APA as a cross-disciplinary field of study and that phenomenology is a discipline that can produce valuable insights into our domain (Reid, 2003; Reid & Stanish, 2003).

Phenomenology as philosophy can give insight into some of the foundational aspects of APA. In the context of this paper I want to highlight two, which are both connected to the expression “people who experience difficulties with movement” (see Reid’s definition of APA above). First, this expression highlights the experiential character of – to use Fitzpatrick and Watkins’ (2003) terminology – failing to perform culturally normative motor skills. Phenomenology underscores the first-person character of this experience, and highlights how the experience is given to the experiencing subject in a manner that is very different from the perspective of professionals who do not have these kinds of experiences (see Toombs, 1992). This insight can be seen as the starting point for both phenomenology as methodology (i.e. the importance of listening to and honoring the experiences of insiders) and phenomenology as pedagogy (i.e. the need for a professional practice that has its genesis in the participants’ lived experiences). This is, I would argue, an example of how knowledge from phenomenology (and more broadly philosophy) as an academic discipline can ground and legitimize research and professional practice in APA.

Second, a contribution from phenomenology with regard to how we can understand “people experiencing movement difficulties” is the relational character of that phenomenon. Indeed, phenomenology helps us seeing that “movement difficulties” is not a character trait of an individual, but is rather a relational phenomenon. This point is underscored through the concept embodiment, which helps us see that movement is at the same time personal and cultural. Movement difficulties are therefore not primarily an intra-personal phenomenon, i.e. something arising in, and belonging to, the individual. Instead, it is inter-personal and cultural. A consequence of this is that regardless of whether we talk about the participants in APA as people with disabilities (or disabled persons), or if we talk about APA as a practice dealing with individual differences, neither disabilities nor individual differences can be fully understood without reference to the cultural context of APA, such as its historically-derived assumptions. Hence, attention must be paid to an analysis of the normativity at stake in what is considered ‘culturally relevant motor skills’. Future research in APA, then, could investigate the contributions from phenomenology and disability studies (e.g. Paterson & Hughes, 1999) to theorize ways of understanding human difference in human movement contexts.

Phenomenology as pedagogy gives insight into how professional practice in APA can be both conceptualized and developed. At the heart of phenomenological pedagogy is the notion of tact (van Manen, 1993), which is an expression for a sensitive way of acting in pedagogical situations. The tactful pedagogues, according to van Manen, are attuned to the lived experiences of the people involved in their professional practice. Thus, phenomenology as pedagogy is based on the kind of evidence that can be derived from sensitive, pedagogical *seeing* (van Manen, 1993). This point can be seen as either an opposition to, or as complementary to, the evidence traditionally valued in evidence-based practice (Bouffard & Reid, 2012; Reid, Bouffard, & MacDonald, 2012; Standal, 2008). In this sense, it illustrates the difference between the first-person and third-person perspective.

In relation to phenomenology as pedagogy, I also criticized van Manen's perspective for not having developed sufficiently the utilization of participants' self-reflection. While phenomenological pedagogy has much to offer in terms of the need for professionals to understand the participants' experiences, it has less to say about how to develop the participants' understanding of their own experiences. I hold that this is a vital source for self-knowledge, and if developed, it can make a contribution to the participants' understanding of themselves as moving human beings.

Following Tinning (2010), it was suggested that – with the exception of the work of Connolly (2008) – little research has been done on phenomenological pedagogy in APA. A basic premise for undertaking phenomenological research appears to be that elucidating the experiences of APA participants can heighten the understanding and sensitivity of current and future practitioners (see e.g. Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000). However, with regard to developing a phenomenological pedagogy for APA, I have argued that a further step needs to be taken. To give an example: consider the qualitative research done on the experiences of pupils with disabilities in PE (e.g. Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000; Goodwin, 2001, Fitzpatrick & Watkinson, 2003). It is fairly safe to say that these studies show that pupils with disabilities have mainly bad, but also some good, experiences from PE. Could one not say that enough is known about this to understand that practice needs to be changed? Merely doing more interview studies (or more quantitative, attitudinal research for that matter) does not improve the situation for pupils with disabilities in PE. Instead, efforts should be directed at changing practice to the better. On this point I follow Ahmed (2012), who argue that “rather than suggesting that knowledge leads (or should lead) to transformation, I offer a reversal that in my view preserves the point or aim of the argument: transformation as a form of practical labor, leads to knowledge” (p. 173). Therefore, I suggest that there is a need for action research in APA. If such studies are based on phenomenology, they hold the potential to develop phenomenological pedagogy in APA.

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