**Social Phenomenology Theory**

Social phenomenology is an approach within the field of sociology that aims to reveal what role human awareness plays in the production of social action, social situations and social worlds. In essence, phenomenology is the belief that society is a human construction.

Phenomenology was originally developed by a German mathematician named [Edmund Husserl](http://atheism.about.com/od/existentialistphilosophers/a/husserl.htm) in the early 1900s in order to locate the sources or essences of reality in the human consciousness. It wasn’t until the 1960s that it entered [the field of sociology](http://sociology.about.com/od/Careers/a/Career-Spotlight-Teaching.htm) by Alfred Schutz, who sought to provide a philosophical foundation for [Max Weber](http://sociology.about.com/od/Profiles/p/Max-Weber.htm)’s interpretive sociology. He did this by applying the [phenomenological philosophy](http://sociology.about.com/od/P_Index/g/Phenomenological-Sociology.htm) of Husserl to the study of the social world. Schutz postulated that it is subjective meanings that give rise to an apparently objective social world. He argued that people depend upon language and the “stock of knowledge” they have accumulated to enable social interaction. All social interaction requires that individuals characterize others in their world, and their stock of knowledge helps them with this task.

The central task in social phenomenology is to explain the reciprocal interactions that take place during human action, situational structuring, and reality construction. That it, phenomenologists seek to make sense of the relationships between action, situation, and reality that take place in [society](http://sociology.about.com/od/S_Index/g/Society.htm). Phenomenology does not view any aspect as causal, but rather views all dimensions as fundamental to all others.

Application Of Social Phenomenology

One classic application of social phenomenology was done by [Peter Berger](http://www.bu.edu/religion/faculty/bios/berger/)and Hansfried Kellner in 1964 when they examined the social construction of marital reality. According to their analysis, marriage brings together two individuals, each from different lifeworlds, and puts them into such close proximity to each other that the lifeworld of each is brought into communication with the other. Out of these two different realities emerges one marital reality, which then becomes the primary social context from which that individual engages in social interactions and functions in society. Marriage provides a new social reality for people, which is achieved mainly through conversations with their spouse in private. Their new social reality is also strengthened through the couple’s interaction with others outside of the marriage. Over time a new marital reality will emerge that will contribute to the formation of new social worlds within which each spouse would function.