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“Phenomenology” and Qualitative Research Methods

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Abstract

Phenomenology is generally based on phenomenological tradition from Husserl to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. As philosophical stances provide the assumptions in research methods, different philosophical stances produce different methods. However, the term “phenomenology” is used in various ways without the definition being given, such as phenomenological approach, phenomenological method, phenomenological research, etc. The term “phenomenology” is sometimes used as a paradigm and it is sometimes even viewed as synonymous with qualitative methods. As a result, the term “phenomenology” leads to conceptual confusions in qualitative research methods. The purpose of this paper is to examine the term “phenomenology” and explore philosophical assumptions, and discuss the relationship between philosophical stance and phenomenology as a qualitative research method in nursing.

Key words

phenomenology qualitative method nursing research hermeneutics

Introduction

Ethnography, grounded theory and phenomenological approaches have been adopted as major qualitative research methods in nursing. Ethnography is a field research method that developed in anthropology. Ethnography studies the culturally shared, common sense perceptions of everyday experience (van Manen, 1990). Ethnography is the work of observing, describing, documenting and analyzing a particular culture or subcultural group from the native point of view (Spradley, 1979; Leininger, 1985; Woods & Catanzaro, 1988). Grounded theory is a research method which developed from the symbolic interactionist view of human behavior in sociology/social psychology (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). Strauss (1990), who originally developed the grounded theory method with Glaser, claims that it is a research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively

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derived theory about a phenomenon.

Phenomenology is a philosophy which is defined as the science of phenomena. The phenomenological approach or phenomenological method is the application of phenomenological philosophy to human science. Morse (1989) illustrates how these methods came into nursing as follows :

Qualitative methods came into nursing through nurses who obtained their doctorates in other fields, such as, anthropology. When these scientists returned to nursing, they continued to conduct research using the methods of their adopted disciplines. For example, nurse-anthropologists continued to use anthropological methods, such as ethnography, and they incorporated these research methods into their teaching. Grounded theory was developed at the University of California, San Francisco, and nurses who were students or collaborators with Glaser and Strauss continue to use this method. Phenomenological methods were also introduced as nurses took courses in other departments with such leaders in phenomenology as Giorgi (University of Pittsburgh) and van Manen (University of Alberta). (p. 3-4)

Each methodological approach is addressed as a different qualitative research method in nursing. But, Morse (1989) raises the question as to whether these qualitative methods are simply techniques of data collection and analysis, or whether the qualitative methods must be used within the context of their discipline's theoretical assumptions and perspectives.

Qualitative method is generally defined as a naturalistic approach to phenomena. In the qualitative method, the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the research setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1989), the research is process oriented, and the process is inductive and focused on understanding the meaning of the phenomena (Hasse, 1984; Woods & Catanzaro, 1988; Morse, 1989). Therefore, reality in qualitative research is thought to be multiple and dynamic (Hasse, 1984; Woods & Catanzaro, 1988).

What are the differences in each method within qualitative research methods? Parse (1989) claims that the differences in methods are rooted in the philosophical beliefs (assumptions) which permeate the research study. Patton (1990) stresses that intellectual, philosophical, and theoretical traditions have greatly influenced the debate about the value and legitimacy of qualitative inquiry, but the method choice in real-world practice is pragmatic. Patton (1990) says, "The methods of qualitative inquiry now stand on their own as reasonable ways to find out what is happening in programs and other human settings" (p. 90). On one hand, in qualitative methods, it is said that the researcher is an instrument and the researcher's view is subjective (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1984). If it was so, the researcher's philosophical stance would be a vital in the qualitative method and should be explicated.

Many of the nurse-researchers who use qualitative methods have neglected to clarify their philosophical stance and to discuss Morse's question. The nurse-researchers have not been concerned with the consistency of philosophical stance and the method in qualitative nursing research. There are some conceptual confusions in qualitative methods which were discussed in nursing journals and books in 1980s. In particular, the term "phenomenology" as used in the nursing literature is ambiguous and misunderstood. The term "phenomenology" is used in various ways without the definition being given, such as phenomenology, phenomenological approach, phenomenological study, phenomenological inquiry, phenomenological method, phenomenological research,

phenomenological investigation, phenomenological theme, phenomenological perspective, phenomenological view and phenomenological movement. These terms “phenomenology” or “phenomenological” are not used undoubtedly in the same way.

Patton (1990) points out the problem in the term “phenomenology” as follows: “Sometimes phenomenology is viewed as a paradigm, sometimes as a philosophy or as a perspective, and it is sometimes even viewed as synonymous with qualitative methods or naturalistic inquiry” (p. 68). In this paper, I will examine the term “phenomenology”, explore philosophical assumptions and discuss the relationship between philosophical stance and phenomenology as a qualitative method in nursing.

Conceptions of Phenomenology

The first question is whether phenomenology is a philosophy or a method. I will not explore the precise definitions of phenomenology, but rather will explicate the original questions discussed by philosophers in the phenomenological tradition/movement.

Phenomenology is generally based on phenomenological tradition of such philosophers as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Alfred Schutz. Most nurse-researchers/scholars who discuss phenomenology in qualitative research methods conflate some of the phenomenologies of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty (Oiler, 1981, 1986; Kanaack, 1984; Benner, 1985, 1986, 1989; Paterson & Zderad, 1988; Anderson, 1989; Bergum, 1989; Munhall, 1986, 1989). Husserl (1859-1938) was a German philosopher, who is called the “father of phenomenology” and his philosophy is called pure or transcendental phenomenology. Heidegger (1889- 1976), who was said to be Husserl’s student, was also German. Heidegger’s philosophy is called hermeneutical phenomenology or phenomenological ontology. Merleau-Ponty was a French philosopher, who developed Husserl’s concept of intentionality in his phenomenology on the one hand, his phenomenology is strongly influenced by existentialism on the other hand. Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty each developed their own conception of phenomenology. It is therefore important to discuss their fundamental differences.

Husserl reasoned that humans know about the world only through experience with consciousness. Husserl claimed that consciousness is always the consciousness of something. According to Watcherauser (1986), “Husserl meant to combat the view that consciousness is dwelling totally within the inner space of its own ‘idea’ and ‘experience’ and only subsequently in contact with ‘external’ reality” (p. 27). All notions of an external world are mediated through the senses and can be known through mental consciousness. Hence, the person does not have direct contact with reality, that is, contact is always indirect and mediated through the processes of the human mind.

For Husserl, phenomenology is a theory and a method opposed to natural science. Husserl (1962) defined his pure or transcendental phenomenology as a science of “phenomena”. Husserl said, “Pure or transcendental phenomenology will be established not as a science of facts, but as a science of essential Being” (p. 40). Husserl stressed the distinction between fact and essence, between real and unreal, and stressed the notion that phenomenology should deal not with the real, but with transcendently reduced phenomena. Husserl therefore defined phenomenology as a descriptive theory of the essence of pure experiences. Husserl (1962) stated that “phenomenology is a pure descriptive discipline which studies the whole field of pure transcendental consciousness in the light of pure intuition” (p. 160). Husserl’s crucial concern is consciousness and he presented the concepts of “phenomenological reduction”, “intersubjectivity” and “life world (Lebenswelt)”. These concepts

strongly contributed to phenomenological approaches or methods in human/social science.

Heidegger (1962) also defined phenomenology as the science of phenomena. Heidegger claimed that phenomenology primarily signified a methodological conception. Heidegger's phenomenology does not characterize the what of the objects of philosophical research as subject-matter, but rather how of that research. Heidegger (1962) said :

Thus "phenomenology" means to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself. This is the formal meaning of that branch of research which calls itself "phenomenology". But here we are expressing nothing else than the maxim formulated above: 'To things themselves!' (p. 58)

For Heidegger (1962), phenomenology neither designates the object of its research, nor characterizes the subject-matter. Phenomenology merely informs us of the "how" with which what is to be treated in the science gets exhibited and handled (Heidegger, 1962, p. 59).

On the other hand, Heidegger stressed that, with regard to its subject-matter, phenomenology is the science of the Being of entities, that is, ontology. Specifically, Heidegger defined the human being as "Dasein". Dasein is Heidegger's crucial concept that is characterized as "Being-in-the-world". Being-in-the-world is the essential state of the Dasein's Being. Heidegger overcame the dualism of object/subject in terms of the concept of Being-in-the-world. According to Spiegelberg (1982), Heidegger concluded that philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology based on the hermeneutic of Dasein, which by implication makes phenomenology the one and only philosophical method.

Merleau-Ponty succeeded to Husserl's notion and defined phenomenology as the study of essences. Merleau-Ponty (1962) claimed, "phenomenology is a philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their 'facticity'" (p. vii). Merleau-Ponty took over the stance of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology on the one hand. On the other, unlike Husserl, Merleau-Ponty stressed that phenomenology is a philosophy for which the world is always "already there" before reflection begins. Merleau-Ponty developed a kind of existential phenomenology.

Merleau-Ponty's crucial concern is the living body. Merleau-Ponty (1962) claimed that we understand the function of the living body by enacting it ourselves in so far as we are "a body" which addresses the world. He defined body as "being-in-the-world" and the perception from which we perceive, judge and value (Solomon, 1974). Perception, according to Merleau-Ponty (1962), "is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them" (p. x-xi). Unlike Husserl who stressed intentionality of consciousness, Merleau-Ponty insisted that the human body is intentional. That is, bodily intentionality, but it is not always consciousness. The body has a capacity to respond in situations without consciousness.

The essence of phenomenology is "to return to things themselves". This is the agreement among phenomenologies of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Spiegelberg (1982) stressed that "even if there were as many phenomenologies as phenomenologists, there should be at least a common core in all of them to justify the use of common label" (p. 677). But we cannot ignore the differences in phenomenology, particularly, the differences between Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerian

phenomenology.

How do nurse-researchers/scholars explicate phenomenology in nursing research? Most of them accept the Psathas's claim that phenomenology is not just a research method but is also a philosophy or an approach (Peggy & Morse, 1985 ; Oiler, 1981 ; Omery, 1983). Anderson (1990) notes that "although the phenomenological tradition is a diversified one, phenomenology is nonetheless a distinctive philosophy, theory, and method for studying the world of everyday life" (p. 16). For nurse-researchers/scholars, phenomenology is a method with philosophical underpinnings that cannot distinguish between the philosophy and the method. In nursing researchers/scholars, phenomenology seems to be recognized rather as a paradigm for understanding nursing phenomena.

"Phenomenology" as a Paradigm

A paradigm is a world view (Kuhn, 1970), a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world (Patton, 1990). Phenomenology as a paradigm is used as an alternative to logical positivism in the quantitative-qualitative debate. In nursing, we generally accept as the quantitative research method with positivistic assumptions versus the qualitative research method with phenomenological assumptions. Duffy (1984) notes the following :

Positivism, a deductive process of knowledge attainment, seeks to verify facts and causal relationships stated in existing theories. . . . Phenomenology, and inductive process, generate theory from facts obtained within the natural setting of the phenomenon (p. 226).

Phenomenology is a paradigm alternative that of the natural sciences, but not all qualitative research methods are based on the assumptions of phenomenology. The vague usages of phenomenology causes confusion between phenomenology as a paradigm and qualitative methods. For example, Bargagliotti (1983) described two competing research traditions as follows :

Nursing is currently experiencing an ideological struggle between two competing research traditions : 1) the scientific method, couched in the assumptions of logical positivism ; and 2) the phenomenological approach with its theoretical underpinnings of symbolic interaction (p. 409).

In this case, Bargagliotti used the term "phenomenological approach" as an equivalent term for "qualitative method", a method opposed to the "scientific method". But, not all qualitative research methods have the same theoretical underpinnings as symbolic interaction. To be exact, the symbolic interaction is not phenomenology's theoretical underpinnings.

Thompson (1990) also brought a confusion in terms of the expression "phenomenological movement" :

The evolution of the phenomenological movement produced several theoretical and methodological extensions such as Schutzian phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, and grounded theory in sociology. Each of these interpretive approaches illustrates the historical development of the phenomenological movement (p. 233).

Schutz, who developed social phenomenology (Schutzian phenomenology), was a sociologist who

brought Husserl's vision of a lifeworld back into the process of interaction (Turner, 1991). Symbolic interactionism, that was developed by G. H. Mead and Blumer, holds a place in the microinteractionist tradition in sociology. Strauss, who developed "grounded theory", was a sociologist who was strongly influenced by symbolic interactionism and pragmatism. Turner (1990) claims that "the early symbolic interactionist's concern with the process of constructing shared meaning was similar to Schutz's desire to understand intersubjectivity" (p. 387). That is, the symbolic interactionist view that focuses on the meanings of events to people in natural or everyday setting corresponds with the phenomenologist view. However, symbolic interactionism and grounded theory are placed in the microinteractionist tradition which is rooted in Durkheimian micro-sociology (Collins, 1985). The root of symbolic interactionism is quite different from the phenomenological tradition in philosophy.

Thompson seems to use the term "phenomenological movement" to denote a paradigm shift. Since 1950s, "the return to things themselves" or "naturalistic approach to phenomena" has made for a scientific revolution (Kuhn, 1970) in social science. Qualitative methods, such ethnography, grounded theory and phenomenological approaches, have developed interdisciplinarily as alternative approaches to the natural sciences. The phenomenological movement has contributed to the development of qualitative methods in social/human science. However, to truly understand the paradigm shift, we should identify the discipline from which the method originated, that is, ethnography's home is in anthropology, grounded theory's home is in sociology and phenomenology's home is in philosophy.

"Phenomenology" as a Research Method

What are the philosophical assumptions that nurse-researchers use in their phenomenological studies? How are the differences between Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerian phenomenology reflected in the methods of nursing research? Salsberry (1989) claims that many questions could be raised about the relationship of the phenomenological method to its philosophical roots. In this section, I will explore the philosophical roots of phenomenological methods which are used in nursing research and discuss the relationship between philosophical stance and the research method.

Paterson and Zderad (1976, 1988) define phenomenology as the descriptive study of phenomena. For Paterson and Zderad, phenomenological description is a basic and essential step in theory development. Phenomenological methods provide an approach to grasp phenomena and some techniques to analyze, synthesize and describe phenomena. Although Paterson and Zderad employ Husserl's term, "intersubjective transaction" or "intersubjectivity" as a central concept in their theory, they also note that the term "phenomenological methods" is plural rather than singular. Paterson and Zderad (1988) state, "The study of the nursing event itself and its conceptualization as proposed in humanistic nursing practice theory is an application of phenomenology. Articulation of our perspective, experience, and ideas is the human way of phenomenology" (p. 60). For Paterson and Zderad, phenomenology is a philosophical foundation from which to develop theory.

Oiler (1981) defined the phenomenological approach as an alternative research method which most effectively can serve nursing's goal to understanding experience. Based on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Oiler claimed that "the aim of phenomenological approach is to describe experience as it is lived" (p. 178). Oiler introduced Spiegelberg's step of phenomenological description as a

method and Paterson and Zderad (1976) as techniques for describing phenomena.

Omery (1983) employs phenomenology as an inductive descriptive method. Omery notes that the concern of the phenomenological researcher is to understand both the subjective cognition of the person who has the experience and the effect that perspective has on the lived experience or behavior of the individual. Therefore, the goal of the method is to describe the total systematic structure of the lived experience, including the meanings that these experiences had for the individuals who participated in them. Omery introduces Giorgi's, van Kaam's and Spiegelberg's methods as phenomenological methodologies. Giorgi (1970) and van Kaam (1966) developed their own phenomenological method in psychology.

Parse, Coyne and Smith (1985) define the phenomenological method as a method of inquiry to uncover the meaning of humanly experienced phenomena through the analysis of subjects' description. They introduce Spiegelberg's method as the essential of the phenomenological method, and van Kaam's and Giorgi's method as modifications.

Oiler (1981), Omery (1983) and Parse, et al. (1985) introduced the Spiegelberg's process of phenomenological description; intuiting, analyzing and describing. These techniques originated from Husserlian phenomenology. Moreover, the concept of "bracketing" is intrinsic to the phenomenological method within Husserlian phenomenology. Bracketing is the process of setting aside or detaching the meaning of the phenomenon for the researcher as opposed to the phenomenon as it appears (Parse, et al., 1985). Here arises the argument relating to this concept, "bracketing". For example, Omery (1983) claims that a primary requisite of phenomenology is that there are no preconceived notions, expectations or frameworks present to guide researchers as they direct and begin to analyze the data. Salsberry (1989) criticizes that "the claim that the researcher can understand the phenomenon without use of preconceived categories is impossible". The question is whether or not the researcher can perceive the phenomenon free from their preconceived notions. Smith (1989) answers Salsberry's comment:

There is no assumption that the researcher approaches the raw data without preconceptions. The phenomenologist makes these preconceptions about lived experience explicit and then "brackets". This means that the researcher holds the beliefs and notions in abeyance while watching them, assesses, and meanings surface from the data during the process of analyzing, intuiting and describing (p. 15).

Smith's notion is synonymous with "the native point of view" in ethnography. And this argument illustrates the difference between descriptive phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology.

Benner's works (1984, 1989) are based on Heidegger's phenomenology. Heidegger questions the view that experience is always and most basically a relation between a self-contained subject with mental content and an dependent object (Dreyfus, 1991). Dreyfus (1991) notes the difference between Husserl and Heidegger:

Heidegger does not deny that we sometimes experience ourselves as conscious subjects relating to objects by way of intentional states such as desires, beliefs, perceptions, intentions, etc. But he thinks of this as a derivative and intermittent condition that presupposes a more fundamental way of being-in-the-world that cannot be understood in subject/object terms (p. 5).

Heidegger rejects the dichotomy between subject and object. Heidegger's view is holistic in that it seeks to study the person in the situation. Benner (1985) and Leonard (1989) presents the assumptions of Heidegger's phenomenology as follows: (1) Dasein is characterized as "Being-in-the-world"; (2) Persons not only have a world in which things have significance and value but they have qualitatively different concerns based on their culture, language, and individual situations; (3) The person is self-interpreting being; (4) The person is embodied; (5) The person is temporal.

Benner (1989) defines phenomenology as a philosophical approach based on the study of things perceived. Benner uses hermeneutics as her methodology and claims that is based on Heideggerian phenomenology. According to Benner (1985), hermeneutics assumes the study of pragmatic activity, namely, everyday understanding and practice. Hermeneutics also assumes the study of relational issue are distinctly different from the study of objects or biological events on the tissue and cellular level (Benner, 1985). Hermeneutics is a holistic strategy and it allows for the study of the person in the situation. Benner (1985) presents the following as her methods:

1. The data are participant observations, field notes, interviews and unobtrusive samples of behavior and interactions in natural settings.
2. The goal is to find themes, exemplars or paradigm cases that embody the meanings of everyday practice.
3. When the interpreter has done a good job, participants can recognize and validate the interpretation.

Benner takes Heideggerian phenomenology as her philosophical stance, and she develops her own method which uses "paradigm cases", "exemplars", and "thematic analysis" to discover meanings and ways of being (everyday practice) in lived experiences. The terms "exemplar" and "paradigm case" in her methods seem to originate from Thomas Kuhn's work (1970). For Benner, Heideggerian phenomenology is a way of thought. From this foundation, Benner has created an alternative research method in nursing.

Munhall and Oiler (1986) discuss phenomenology and phenomenological method based on Merleau-Ponty. According to Oiler, a common feature of phenomenological studies in nursing to date is the elicitation of a number of subject' verbalized and written descriptions of a retrospective experience. The result in phenomenological inquiry is always a description of an experience as presented through a particular researcher's perspective. Oiler (1986) presents the following as principle and techniques in the phenomenological method:

1. Attention to subjects' realities in formulating the research question. The elusive concepts that characterize nursing concerns in practice provide the subject matter for our studies.
2. Attention to such realities requires that the researcher approach the study with holistic perspective.
3. The researcher must recognize that he or she is immersed in the phenomenon of study by virtue of studying it. The researcher is an integral part of the research process, a range of modes of awareness can be used in data collection.
4. Phenomenology aims to describe experience rather than to define, categorize, explain, or interpret it.

Oiler's notions, based on Merleau-Ponty and Schutz, are the application of phenomenological methods which developed in social science. Oiler (1986) presents phenomenology as a research framework for qualitative research methods. Oiler claims:

Together with an understanding of human experience as involvement in a world and perception as original awareness of that involvement, these phenomenological themes, considered broadly, provide a general philosophical framework that we recognize in the assumptions and leanings of qualitative research approaches." (p. 48)

Although Oiler's claim provides a phenomenological research framework based on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, there remains ambiguity about how that philosophical stance reflects the research process (steps).

Phenomenology and Hermeneutics

Finally, I would like to discuss the problems of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Hermeneutics was introduced in nursing by Benner (1984, 1989), Reeder (1988), Leonard (1989), Allen and Jensen (1990) and Thompson (1990). As Thompson (1990) points out, hermeneutics emerged as a research method in nursing in 1980s. Benner's works (1984, 1989) are based on Heideggerian phenomenology, and are recognized as hermeneutics. Why is Benner's work classified hermeneutics? How does hermeneutics differ from phenomenology?

Hermeneutics is not a new term. Its origin is Biblical but the term "hermeneutics" appeared in Heidegger's philosophy, Being and time. Heidegger says, "The phenomenology of Dasein is a hermeneutic in the primordial signification of this word, where it designates this business of interpreting" (p. 62). Packer (1985) notes, "Hermeneutics involves an attempt to describe and study meaningful human phenomena in a careful and detailed manner as free as possible from prior theoretical assumptions, based instead on practical understanding." (p. 1081, p. 1082) In everyday life, we are interpreting in seeing, hearing and receiving. The aim of hermeneutics is to make the understanding meaningful for life and thought (Shapiro and Sica, 1984). Gadamer (1984, 1989), who developed hermeneutics as a method based on Heidegger's philosophy, states the hermeneutics as interpretive theory.

Hermeneutics is not a rigorous philosophical method but is instead a philosophical movement or tendency in that it designates a set of general concerns rather than a body of doctrine (Shapiro & Sica, 1984). According to Wachterhauser (1986), hermeneutics is not firmly united behind a single theory or personality. Advocates of hermeneutics share a family of critical concerns and perspectives that makes their philosophical program a strongly united one. Hermeneutical thinkers, therefore, see history and language functioning as special types of transcendental conditions of all understanding, and argue against the assumption that understanding takes places in terms of conditions that are always and everywhere the same (Wachterhauser, 1986).

Hermeneutics has influenced the fields of anthropology, sociology, psychology, phenomenology and historical research and so on. The close association between hermeneutics and phenomenology is evidenced in Heideggerian phenomenology. Thompson (1990) describes that although phenomenology has been accepted as a descriptive approach to research, Heideggerian phenomenology distinguishes hermeneutics from "transcendental Husserlian phenomenology".

Benner (1989) claims that her work based on Heideggerian phenomenology is an interpretive theory. Benner differentiates phenomenological approaches and develops her own interpretive theory and method.

Van Manen (1990) makes a distinction between phenomenology and hermeneutics, for example :

phenomenology because it is the descriptive study of lived experience (phenomena) in the attempt to enrich lived experience by mining its meaning; hermeneutics because it is interpretive study of the expression and objectifications (texts) of lived experience in the attempt to determine the meaning embodied in them (p. 38).

Husserl held that all interpretation is a secondary act. For Husserl, the first thing is realize what is present for senses, that is, sense perception (Gadamer, 1984, p. 60). Therefore there is no hermeneutic moment in Husserl's analysis of the experiences of consciousness.

In the phenomenological movement, each of the philosophers described phenomenology differently. In the movement of social and human science, each researcher originated his/her own method from various philosophical stance. Oiler (1989) says, "Each interpretation needs to be scrutinized individually for its fidelity to the philosophy and its relevance to nursing. It would be unfortunate to dismiss phenomenology based on the features of a particular interpretation" (p. 19). If we try to develop the phenomenological approach as a nursing research method which is closely connected with phenomenological philosophy, we will need to identify the philosophical stance of the researcher as an instrument.

Conclusion

1. The philosophical foundation of phenomenology is to return to things themselves. This theme is consistent throughout the phenomenological tradition from Husserl to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty.
2. The term "phenomenological approach" or "phenomenology" is not synonymous with qualitative research method. Even though within the phenomenological approach, when researchers' philosophical stances are different, different methods will be produced.
3. The philosophical stance, which will be created by the researcher, consists of multiple fundamental ideas of philosophers. Philosophical stances provide the assumptions in research, therefore, the methods must be used within the context of their discipline's philosophical/theoretical assumptions.
4. The phenomenological methods/approaches which are used as a nursing research method employ the following three generations: The first generation is that the researcher develops an original method based on phenomenology as the philosophical stance; the second generation is that the researcher applies the phenomenological method which was developed in another discipline in nursing; the third generation is that the researcher modifies the phenomenological method which was developed in the other discipline in order to apply it to nursing.
5. The movement of hermeneutics in nursing makes differentiation between descriptive study and interpretive study.

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