Phenomenology: a method for nursing research

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DURING THE PAST 20 years nursing has made great progress in developing and consolidating its scientific knowledge base. The method most prevalent in the development of this knowledge base is the traditional scientific method. The use of this method in nursing research has made significant contributions toward understanding the complex and unique animal that is the human being.

Yet the traditional scientific method is only one of the ways available for studying the human individual. For a growing group of nurse researchers, the scientific method has become constraining. The method's inherent nature, which reduces the human being under study to an object with many small quantitative units, has become problematic for many nurse researchers. It gives no clue as to how to fit these small units back into the dynamic whole that is the living human being with whom the nurse interacts in practice.

Finding the traditional scientific method unsatisfactory, nurse researchers have

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begun to investigate alternative qualitative research methodologies. Such alternative methods are not meant to replace quantitative research methods; rather, they are meant to complement them. One such alternative qualitative method is phenomenology.

Phenomenology, which attempts to study the human experience as it is lived,[1] is not just a research method but is also a philosophy and an approach.[2] Failure of researchers who attempt to use phenomenology to understand the difference between phenomenology as a research method, philosophy, or approach has led to the accusation by those more comfortable with quantitative methods that phenomenology is "ambiguous and ill-defined, full of cryptic yet pregnant slogans."[3(p37)] Contrary to the accusation, it is possible to differentiate phenomenology, the research method, as a viable and valuable qualitative methodology.

WHAT IS THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD?

The phenomenological method is an inductive, descriptive research method. The task of the method is to investigate and describe all phenomena, including the human experience, in the way these phenomena appear "in their fullest breadth and depth."[4(p2)] To ensure that the phenomenon is being investigated as it truly appears or is experienced, a necessary criterion is that the researcher must approach the phenomenon to be explored with no preconceived expectations or categories. The researcher is not seeking to validate any preselected theoretical framework. A phenomenological researcher has no preconceived operational definitions. The subject to be studied is approached naively; all data are accepted as given. The data gathered using this method are not limited to observable facts or objective empirical data. They include all available phenomena, including the subjective meanings that these phenomena or experiences had for the participants. The researcher using this method strives to understand all data in the experience under study from the perspective of the participants in the experience.

The concern of the phenomenological researcher is to understand both the cognitive subjective perspective of the person who has the experience and the effect that perspective has on the lived experience or behavior of that individual.[5] The goal of the method is to describe the total systematic structure of lived experience, including the meanings that these experiences had for the individuals who participated in them. Blumensteil in a most proficient yet succinct statement described the method as "the trick of making things whose meanings seem clear, meaningless, and then, discovering what they mean."[6(p189)]

WHERE DID THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD COME FROM?

Phenomenology as a method for research in any of the human sciences, including nursing, grew out of a philosophical movement that is still in the process of being clarified. As a result, one can find multiple interpretations and modifications of phenomenological philosophy. Researchers in the social sciences who have given form to the phenomenological

methods have been inspired by, but not bound to, phenomenological philosophy. It is possible and valuable in understanding the method to chart a historical path from the phenomenological method of philosophy to the phenomenological methods currently in use in the social sciences.

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD AND PHILOSOPHY

The birth of phenomenological philosophy as a school of thought and as a method has largely been attributed to the work of Edmund Hesserl. His work seems to have been inspired and heavily influenced by the significant success in the natural sciences during the latter half of the 19th century. As the natural sciences began to make significant contributions in technology and in increasing the standards of living in Western society, the knowledge base (philosophy) that had reigned dominant for the previous 2000 or so years began to be assailed with assertions that its knowledge, as opposed to scientific knowledge, was esoteric and trite. As the scientific method and scientific knowledge as defined by the natural sciences became dominant, the theory that grew out of both the method and its expanding knowledge began to effectively and efficiently control and predict natural phenomena. If the movements of the stars could be predicted, the growing group of scientists reasoned, why couldn't the movements of human beings be predicted? If the behaviors of rivers could be controlled to benefit society, couldn't the behavior of people be controlled with the new scientific methods to even further benefit society? The scientific study of the human being, the object,

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became dominant. The phenomenological method in philosophy began to crystalize in reaction to the denigration of philosophical knowledge and the objectification of humans.

The resulting phenomenological method is a solitary, introspective process that aims at "seeing the clear apprehension of evident giveness."[7(p151)] The historian of the phenomenological movement in philosophy, Spiegelberg,[8,9] has identified the six steps of the method that are common to all interpretations or modifications of phenomenological philosophy. These steps are as follows:

1. Descriptive phenomenology: direct investigation, analysis, and description of the phenomena under study, as free as possible from preconceived expectations and presuppositions.
2. Phenomenology of the essences (essential or eidetic phenomenology): perception and probing of the phenomena for typical structures or "essentials" and for the relationship of the structures.
3. Phenomenology of appearances: giving attention to or watching for the ways phenomena appear in different perspectives or modes of clarity, ie, determining the distinct from the hazy surrounding it.
4. Constitutive phenomenology: exploring the constitution or the way in

Table 1. Comparison of the steps of three phenomenological methodologies

Giorgi	Van Kaam	Spiegelberg (philosophical)
1. Naive description of the phenomena accomplished via an interview with the subject. 2. The researcher reads the entire description to get a sense of the whole. 3. The researcher reads the description more slowly and identifies individual units. or 4. The researcher eliminates redundancies in the units, clarifying or elaborating the meanings of the remaining units by relating them to each other and to the whole. 5. The researcher reflects on the given units, and transforms the meaning from concrete language into the language or concepts of the science. 6. The researcher then integrates and synthesizes the insights into a descriptive structure which is communicated to other researchers for confirmation and/or criticism.	1. Preliminary consideration of a specific moment of experience. 2. Research questions are evoked by the experiences. What are the necessary and sufficient constituents of this feeling? What does the existence of this feeling tell me concerning the nature of man? 3. Awareness phase of explication. Implicit awareness of a complex phase becomes explicit formulated knowledge of its components through the collection of a number of crude prescientific explanations made by untrained subjects. 4. Scientific explication Listing or classifying data into categories. The data come from empirical data, ie, a large random sample of cases taken from the total pool of descriptions. The final listing, a review of the various elements and their percentages, must be agreed upon by expert judges. Reduction of concrete, vague, intricate, and overlapping descriptions to more precisely descriptive terms. Here, too, intersubjective agreement among the expert judges is required. Elimination of those elements which are not inherent. Hypothetical identification of categories. Application of the hypothetical descriptions to randomly selected cases of the original sample. A careful analysis is done to deter-	1. Investigating the particular phenomena. Phenomenological intuiting. Phenomenological analyzing: analysis of the phenomena, not the expressions that refer to them. Phenomenological describing, based on classification. 2. Investigating the general essences; looking at the particulars to apprehend the general essences and their relationships. 3. Watching the modes of appearing. 4. Exploring the constitution of the phenomena in consciousness. 5. Suspending belief in existence, ie, bracketing. 6. Interpreting the meanings which are not immediately manifest to our intuiting, analyzing, and describing.

Table 1 (*continued*)

Giorgi	Van Kaam	Spiegelberg (philosophical)
	mine if new hypothetical categories will appear. If they do, they must be tested against a new random sample of cases. 5. Final identification and description: validity lasts until other cases are presented which do not correspond to the necessary and sufficient constituents contained in the final listing.	

which the phenomenon establishes itself or takes shape in consciousness.

5. Reductive phenomenology: suspending belief in the reality or validity of the phenomena; a process that has been implicit since the inception of the method now becomes explicit through the use of the technique of "bracketing," which can be defined as "detaching the phenomena of our everyday experience from the context of our naive or natural living, while preserving the content as fully and purely as possible."[8(p18)]
6. Hermeneutic phenomenology: interpreting the concealed meanings in the phenomena that are not immediately revealed to direct investigation, analysis, and description.

Table 1 shows a comparison of the steps of the philosophical method with the steps of two phenomenological methods being implemented in the social sciences.

When directly challenged, Spiegelberg was able to indicate some human uses for each of the steps of the philosophical phenomenological method. Most researchers in the social sciences who have advocated or implemented the phenomenological method have been inspired by it, rather than directly applying these steps.

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

The impetus for the development of a phenomenological method for the human sciences was a perceived failure by investigators using the methods developed by the natural sciences in adequately explaining the phenomenon that the human sciences were investigating—the human being. The image of a person being developed using the traditional methods of the natural sciences was for many too simplistic and demeaning.

Results of research using the natural science approach, in which the subject was not asked to report the experience but to perform a task such as reacting to a stimulus or memorizing a list, often failed to be transferable to the personal life experience. Many researchers in the human sciences

began to realize that there was a difference between "things known and the human knowledge of things."[10(p vi)] What was deleted in the objective scientific experiment, the subjective experience, was beginning to be perceived as more basic and real in the understanding of human knowledge and behavior than the codifications that the experimental researchers called data.

In addition, many researchers in the human sciences pointed to the paucity of reliable and valid laws in explaining or predicting human behavior or experience being developed using the natural scientific research approach. The belief that "measurement preceeds existence."[11(pp63,64)] began to result in postulations that the existence of human sciences was not possible, that what were developing were instead pseudosciences. The conclusion for some who accepted only the natural scientific method was the acknowledgment that human sciences were not and could not be sciences. Therefore they should be disassembled, with the knowledge and techniques already developed to be absorbed by the appropriate natural science, such as biology or chemistry.[12]

Others perceiving these same deficits felt that the blame lay not in the impossibility of meeting the aims of the human sciences—ie, to explain and understand human behavior—but rather in the methods used to examine and define that behavior. Natural scientific research methods had been developed to explain specific phenomena, not the human experience. Many researchers searching for alternate methods, especially in psychology with its direct and recent link to philosophy, began to realize the value of the phenomenological method for understanding and explaining the human experience.

HOW DOES ONE IMPLEMENT THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD?

Many researchers who support and promote the phenomenological method for the social sciences would defer restricting the phenomenological approach to a structured methodology or sequence of steps.[2,5,13] Still others would inform the novice researcher who wishes to use the phenomenological method that for the research to be truly of a phenomenological nature, one must not and cannot develop a set of steps, but rather must proceed as the direction of the experience indicates without the restrictions such a structure would impose.[14] For these researchers, the method is the approach. The phenomenological method is approaching the phenomenon with no preconceived expectations or categories, performing some form of bracketing to define the limits of the experience, and then exploring the meaning of that experience as it unfolds for the participants.

Although this definition of phenomenology as an approach may be sufficient for some researchers, it has been of concern for others, expecially those in professions like nursing. They tend to be sensitive to accusations that their disciplines are neither scientific nor a science. For many researchers, a more definitive methodology was a prerequisite to its effective implementation. The strongest impetus for the development of this definitive methodology was in psychology. This was pos-

sibly due to at least three reasons: (1) Psychology, like nursing, experiences direct competition with medicine, a science that uses natural scientific research methods effectively and efficiently. (2) The development of a definitive methodology by psychology seems to have been an attempt to increase the legitimacy of the method, since psychology was an integral part of a graduate program in an already established academic setting in which the natural scientific method dominated. (3) This move to identify a more structured methodology was possibly due to the sensitivity of psychology because so much of its original knowledge base was rooted in (if not a part of) philosophy. This direct tie to philosophy has been to psychology's advantage, however, as researchers sought to implement and refine the phenomenological method for use in the social sciences.

Van Kaam method

The first clearly defined methodology for the phenomenological approach was formulated by Adrian Van Kaam and exemplified in his study of "really being understood."[15,16] The method that he promotes is specific but has much value in interpreting the methodology for those unfamiliar with phenomenology. The steps of the method used by Van Kaam are as follows:

Preliminary considerations

This is consideration of the specific moment of the experience. In Van Kaam's example the consideration was, "What does it mean to be really understood?" For a nurse researcher, preliminary consideration might result from professional practice. Taking care of a person who has just had major surgery or admitting a client with chronic low back pain, the nurse might ask, "What is this experience called pain?"

Identification of the research question evoked by the experience

This identification can be accomplished through two questions. (1) What are the necessary and sufficient constituents of this feeling or experience? (2) What does the existence of this feeling or experience indicate concerning the nature of the human being? The nurse who is interested in the experience of pain might ask: (1) What are the constituents of this experience called pain? (2) How does the pain experience affect my client and my practice?

Awareness phase of explication

During this step the implicit awareness of a complex phenomenon such as the pain experience becomes explicit formulated knowledge of its component parts. This explicit awareness is made possible through the spontaneous, crude, and prescientific explanations of the phenomenon gathered in writing from untrained sub-

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jects. For the nurse researcher, the subjects would probably be drawn from clients who had recently had the experience.

The population from which the sample of subjects is drawn must have the ability to speak with ease in the language in which the study is conceived and implemented, to understand and express inner feelings without guilt or inhibitions, and to understand and express the physiological experiences that accompany these feelings. They must have shared the experience, preferably at a recent date, and be interested in the experience or feeling. A relaxed atmosphere and sufficient time to express the feeling or experience are essential.

Scientific explication

Using a random sample of the explanations gathered from the subjects, the raw data are first listed and then classified. These classifications are ranked according to a percentage score resulting from the number of times these pieces of raw data were listed by the subjects. In the pain research, for example, raw data might indicate such possible classifications as (1) "Pain is increased when I am alone;" and (2) "Pain is increased following ambulation." If classification number 1 is mentioned 20 times out of 100, it has a score of 20%. It would then be ranked higher than classification number 2, which had a score of 10 times out of 100, or 10%. A final listing is agreed on by expert judges, chosen by the researcher following a review of the initial process of classification.

The data in each classification are then reduced by restructure or elimination of vague, intricate, or overlapping explanations. Intersubjective agreement of expert judges is required again at this time. Explanations that are probably not inherent are eliminated.

Hypothetical identification of categories indicated by the classification is then done. An example of a category developed from the experience of being really understood was "Perceiving signs of understanding from the other person." For the nurse researching pain, categories developed might describe under what circumstances the pain experience did or did not occur, or what interventions were or were not effective.

Application of the hypothetical explanatory categories to a new sample of randomly drawn descriptions from the remaining prescientific explanations is done to determine if any new categories will emerge. This process is continued until no new categories of explanation can be established.

Final identification and description of the data

At this point, the researcher should be able to completely describe the experience being studied and to answer the research questions developed. Reliability and validity of the explanation of the experience and its meaning lasts until cases that do not correspond to the necessary and sufficient constituents contained in the completed categories are identified.

Giorgi method

Just as quantitative experimental researchers have recognized that the scientific method is not just one method but many different types of experiments and

quasi-experiments, phenomenological researchers are not limited in their methods to the one identified by Van Kaam. This is not to negate its usefulness, but rather is an understanding that the phenomena to be studied in nursing and other human sciences do not always meet the specific criteria, such as large sample size, required by this particular method. Another much implemented phenomenological methodology in the human sciences is identified by Giorgi and his associates.[17,18]

Description of experience

Giorgi's method recognizes that all phenomenological research starts with a naive description of the experience under study. This method would require the researcher to let the experience unfold as it exists for the subject in an unbiased way. While recognizing that the quality of descriptions may vary and that the more criteria identified, the better the final results for the researcher, helpful clarifications by the researcher are discouraged so that the resulting description is truly the experience as the subject experiences it. Data are gathered in this method in a lengthy interview that may be continued in several sessions. Because of the length of the data-gathering interview(s) and the detail of the complete description, the sample size is usually small. For Giorgi, the primary difference in the differing phenomenological methods is in the data analysis.

A nurse who wished to use the methodology described by Giorgi to study why some clients coped well with the stress of chronic illness while others did not might start by choosing four or five clients who had coped well with the disease process. They would be asked to describe what they did to cope with their disease. Tape recording or taking notes, whichever is appropriate for the particular client, is often utilized during the interview process. When the interviews are completed, data analysis begins.

Data analysis

The procedure of data analysis described by Giorgi has five steps:

1. The researcher reads the entire description of the experience to get a sense of the whole. The nurse would read either the notes or a transcription of the total descriptions of the optimal coping methods given by the clients.
2. The researcher reads the description again more slowly, identifying transitions or units in the experience, called constituents. These constituents are not elements, the definition of which implies that one builds on the other, eventually forming a whole. Rather, these units are discriminate, together making up the whole meaning of the experience. The nurse might identify such constituents as frequent conversations with a significant other or frequent diversional activities such as a hobby or skill.
3. The researcher eliminates redundancies in the units, clarifying or elaborating the meaning of the remaining units by relating them to each other and the whole.
4. The researcher reflects on the given constituents, still identified in the concrete language of the subject, and transforms that concrete language

into the language or concepts of science. The nurse might transform the concrete language unit, "I felt better when ..." to a classification called "successful coping strategies," with subsequent listing of specific strategies.

5. The researcher then integrates and synthesizes the insights into a descriptive structure of the meaning of that experience. The final product is then communicated to other researchers for critique. At this point, the nurse researcher would probably integrate insights from all of the interviews into a total description of the successful coping experience. This description would then be shared with other nurses for critique.

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See Table 1 for a comparison of this and Van Kaam's method to the steps of philosophical phenomenology.

Colaizzi method

The final methodology to be identified placed almost total emphasis on describing data collection methods. Specifically, Colaizzi[19] emphasized matching the appropriate source of data with the appropriate method for collecting data. Analysis of the data for Colaizzi occurs concurrently with data collection in the last two of the four types of methodologies that he discussed. The sources of data and the corresponding methods of data collection and analysis were as follows:

Written descriptions and protocol analysis

Van Kaam's methodology is an example of this method of data collection and analysis.

Dialogal interview and imaginative listening

This method requires the researcher to be aware of the subject as a total being, listening with more than just the ears, using all of the senses. Upon receipt of the data, analysis is similar to the steps used in Van Kaam's methodology, but the perceptions of the researcher are included in the analysis. Giorgi's method is very similar to this process.

Observation of lived events and perceptual description

This particular method of phenomenological research seeks to explain those experiences that are beyond human experiential awareness or to examine those experiences that cannot be communicated.[19(p65)] The former types of experiences include all behaviors that are unconscious, behaviors that occur but cannot be explicitly described. These behaviors include such activities as typing and dancing. They might include those behaviors performed by preverbal human subjects such as children or nonverbal human subjects.

Data are collected through a process called perceptual description. This involves putting aside all preconceived notions of how the experience will proceed. The experience is approached by the research-

ers naively, as a whole. It is not to be perceived as an unfolding or building up of isolated units, but rather as a totality of several units of equal importance. The final product is a description of the total behavior, activity, or social event as perceived by the researcher.

Imaginative presence and phenomenological reflection

This particular phenomenological method aims at describing psychological phenomena through a reflective process undertaken by the researcher. The method in this case is the result. Price and Barrell[20] have envisioned what they perceive as a new research paradigm starting with this type of phenomenological method. Researchers would first reflect on their own experience, disclosing the meaning of the experience to the conscious reflective mind. From these meanings testable hypotheses would be generated. The established quantitative experimental methods would be used to test these experimental hypotheses.

HOW HAS THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD BEEN IMPLEMENTED?

The phenomenological method has value in exploring the meaning and perceived structure of any event or experience that affects human beings and has been implemented in many areas. Examples of the subject areas explored using the phenomenological method seem to be as diverse as the occurrences experienced by human beings. Phenomenology has been used to examine areas that previously have not been amenable to traditional forms of scientific research, such as the attitude toward an experience or the meaning that experience has for the participant.[6,18,21-23]

But the phenomenological method has also been used in areas in which the traditional scientific method has been the only one previously used, such as perception and learning.[16] It has been used to explore the meaning that an illness has had for its sufferer, as opposed to the scientific studies that have only explored the effect of the pathophysiology on the subject.[17] In sociology, the method has been used to explore the events of human interaction and the meanings that the structure of organizations have for the human participants.[2,24]

In nursing, the phenomenological method has been used to explore the meaning of death, opening new understanding of the meaning of that experience for individuals who knowingly face death in the near future.[25] The list of ways that the phenomenological method could be implemented is infinite. As long as an experience has meaning, the potential is there for the phenomenological method to be utilized.

HOW DOES THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD DIFFER FROM OTHER RESEARCH METHODS?

Quantitative research methods

The phenomenological methods and quantitative methods have many differences. Colaizzi[19] points out four differences: (1) The traditional scientific method is experimentation, whereas phenomenolo-

gy's method is description. (2) The objective of the traditional method is causal analysis, whereas phenomenology's objective is identification. (3) The principal thinking in the traditional method is calculative, whereas the thinking in phenomenology is principally meditative. (4) Finally, Colaizzi believes that the traditional quantitative method is promoted by a technological life style that seeks to dominate, control, and make more efficient. Phenomenological methods, on the other hand, promote an understanding of human beings, wherever they might dwell.

Although Colaizzi's comparison is helpful and informative, it is a broad comparison. Giorgi[11,17] has discussed several characteristics that differ in a more specific way, in comparing phenomenology with traditional quantitative research methods. Quantitative methods are empirically based, requiring data to be within the reach of the senses of the researcher. Phenomenological methods accept as data all of the previously mentioned sources, as well as the subjective descriptions of the meaning or feeling that the experience had for the subject or the researcher.

Positivism

Quantitative methods are positivistic, requiring data to be translated into mechanical laws, whereas phenomenology accepts as valuable the accurate description of the experience that the data provide. Related to positivism is the determinism of the quantitative methods, requiring that all data have causes and thereby inferring that duplicating the cause will duplicate the data. Phenomenology, on the other hand, accepts the experience as it exists in the consciousness of the subject and does not expect duplicate behavior from duplicate data. Duplication may occur when the meanings of experiences are similar. Generalizations may be made based on these similar meanings, but exact duplication is not required.

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Reductionism

Quantitative methods are reductionalistic in that they require data to be reducible to the researcher's operational definition. The phenomenological researcher accepts all data as it appears, without trying to modify it to fit a preconceived definition of the phenomenon or a preconceived theoretical framework. Quantitative methods are analytic, requiring the whole to be broken down to its smallest part and for each of these parts to be examined individually. The researchers using phenomenological methods do not refuse to examine the parts or units, and they recognize that a whole may be quite different from the sum of its parts.

Quantitative methods require an independence of the researcher. The data should be studied in such a way that it is not influenced by the researcher. Phenomenological research, on the other hand, recognizes, identifies, and incorporates where appropriate the biases of the researcher. Finally, the quantitative methods require that the collection, analysis, and description of the data and the results

be quantitative. Phenomenological methods accept and use all data in all forms.

Similarities

Although the differences are many, there are similarities between quantitative and phenomenological methods. Both methods are interested in identifying and indexing the differences and similarities in their data. This process of indexing is not sufficient in itself; it is done in an effort to interpret the most comprehensive meaning of the data.

Qualitative methods

Since phenomenological methods can be classified as a type of qualitative methodology, they share many similarities with all qualitative methods. Differences do exist, however. Chief among the differences is the primary requisite of phenomenology that no preconceived notions, expectations, or frameworks be present or guide the researchers as they gather and analyze the data. Another inductive qualitative research method familiar to many nurses, grounded theory,[26] differs from phenomenology in that it recommends using a library search for appropriate journals, newspaper articles, or other materials of interest[27] to form preconceptions or sensitizing concepts prior to data collection.

In addition to preconceptions, grounded theory differs from the phenomenological method in that grounded theory assumes the existence of a process. This process or pattern of interaction that creates and sustains social structure is what the researcher seeks to uncover.[13,26] The phenomenological method makes no assumptions. It does not deny that such things as process might be discovered, but phenomenology does not assume that processes exist before they are described.[24] In the phenomenological method the researcher approaches the subject and the experience with an open mind, accepting whatever data are given. No overlying framework is used to organize the data. Rather, the data are organized and described as given. Furthermore, no data are ignored because of conflicts with the established criteria, operational definitions, or theoretical frameworks.

The goal of the phenomenological method is an accurate description of the experience or phenomenon under study. This differs from other qualitative methodologies such as grounded theory. Here the goal is to develop theory and to integrate ideas into coherent models and general explanations.[13,26]

Chief among the similarities with other qualitative methods is the use of all data presented or available in the research experience. All data, whether subjective or objective, are valuable to the qualitative researcher. Second, rather than relying on quantitative interpretations, the data are reported in the natural language of the event or in the shared scientific concepts of the discipline, whichever is appropriate. Finally, qualitative research usually is done in a natural setting rather than in the laboratory.

WHAT IMPLICATIONS DOES THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD HAVE FOR NURSING SCIENCE?

For too long the quantitative methods have been the only methods of scientific research legitimized in the scientific com-

munity. Even when these methods have failed to be as valid and reliable in nursing and other human sciences as they have been in the natural sciences, researchers in nursing have clung to them, feeling that their only claim to the title of scientist lay in the quantitative methods.

Other nurse scientists have realized, however, that they can no longer ignore the fact that the view of humans developed by the quantitative methods is not comprehensive. Rather, it is a simplistic reduction and abstraction of a part of this phenomenon. For these researchers, science has grown beyond the quantitative methods to differing approaches and methods. Such nurse researchers recognize the value that phenomenological methods have in exploring human phenomena.[28-32] The nursing profession is proud of its identification as a humanistic discipline. The profession's values and beliefs include a view that the human phenomenon is holistic and meaningful. The phenomenological methods share such values and beliefs. They consider all that is available in the experience under study, both subjective and objective, and strive to understand the total meaning that the experience has had for the participants.

Nurse researchers who advocate the use of phenomenology are not trying to replace quantitative methods with phenomenological ones. Instead, they see the two different types of methods as complementary, with each achieving its own specific accomplishments and contributions to and for human knowledge.

The impact that phenomenological methods have on nursing research depends to a great extent on the value of the knowledge that is generated for nursing practice. That value can be and is beginning to be demonstrated by phenomenological researchers in nursing who have come to realize that to be a scientist does not mean strict adherence to a specific set of methodologies. Rather it is "to have boundless curiosity surrounded by a discipline."[33(p72)]

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