Aesthetic Inquiry: An Emerging Qualitative Method

Abstract Information

Introduction: Embracing a holistic paradigm, art is being incorporated into nursing research and practice. Aesthetic Inquiry (AI) is an emerging method of qualitative research for examining data available in a variety of creative forms. AI extends beyond the intent of the original artist and is used to enhance expression and communication of inner experiences. Lead by the work of Pellico and Chinn (2007), we developed a novel method to explore shared themes in pieces of artwork.

Method(s): Our method for AI provides a framework to explore what the images "say" about the human experience. There are nine steps to the process: (1) Engage in bracketing; (2) compose the researcher's lens; (3) determine whether the art work meets study inclusion criteria; (4) analyze each work of art for selected features and repeating themes or elements; (5) identify elements of significance; (6) return to the data for repeated and confirmatory analyses; (7) identify and synthesize relationships among the themes; (8) return to the data to confirm that the themes are exhaustive and supported; and (9) express the analysis.

Results: Each step of this framework for exploring art as a medium of expression will...
be presented as a method for aesthetic qualitative research.

Discussion: Images should not simply be thought of as a realm of representation, but also containing information, which can be utilized in the investigation of social and cultural processes (Emmison, 2006). AI gives nurse researchers the opportunity to explore expression of life experiences through art. Various forms of non-verbal self-expression have been found to be helpful in assisting patients to express their feelings. Through artistic expression, lived experiences can become known. Such expression provides insight into the patient's personally meaningful reality (Price et al., 2007), leading to a more holistic approach to nursing care.

Research Completed: Yes
Abstract History: NA
Financial Disclosure: Have a financial arrangement or affiliation with commercial companies whose products may be mentioned in this material? No
FDA Disclosure: Cleared: Yes
Non-Exclusive License: Accepted Terms: Yes
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