Syllabus Selections

Innovative Learning Activities

Romantic Song Lyrics Used to Facilitate Nursing Students’ Comprehension of Qualitative Data Analysis

In an effort to promote evidence-informed practice, most baccalaureate nursing curricula include courses outlining the philosophical and practical aspects of research methodology and critical appraisal. Although these types of foundational courses are highly relevant, they may be viewed by some students as difficult to apply to their practice, especially if they have few clinical experiences on which to draw. In a second-year baccalaureate course titled Research for Evidence-Informed Practice offered at a western Canadian university, students develop an understanding of the steps of the research process over a 13-week term. After an introduction to evidence-informed practice, the nature of knowledge, and classes regarding research ethics and quantitative inquiry, students participate in classes focused on naturalistic inquiry and qualitative research methodology. To engage students and encourage them to develop a richer understanding of various methods of qualitative analysis, the authors have developed a song lyric thematic analysis class activity, which challenges students to interact and code their own thematic analyses of a variety of love song lyrics. Through the
objectives of having the students learn about, engage in, and discuss one type of qualitative thematic analysis, the goal of this activity is to encourage student reflexivity in interacting with data and comparing and contrasting their developing themes with the analyses presented by their peers.

Activity

This activity is practical, requires few formal resources, and can be implemented in almost any class size. With an enrollment of approximately 100, the students are asked to create groups of five members. They are directed to any number of Web sites using the search term romantic love songs. Approximately 12 sets of song lyrics are selected by the class, and students are given the following instructions that are based on an outline of qualitative data analysis by Cameron (2013):

- Find lyrics from two songs that the class has agreed on to discuss (there are approximately three groups who will be analyzing each set of lyrics).
- Sort and sift through the lyrics to identify similar phrases, patterns, and themes between the two songs.
- Isolate the patterns, processes, commonalities, and differences.
- Gradually elaborate on a small set of generalizations that cover the consistencies in the data.
- Come together as a class to discuss your findings and address the generalizations you have found in each of your groups.

Student Reactions

Student engagement in this activity is high as they uncover various themes in music that have been labelled as romantic. It is enlightening to observe their discovery that many of the songs they prefer to listen to reveal subtle themes of dominance, misogyny, lust, and lack of consent under the guise of romance and love. The students’ personal reactions to participating are also gratifying, with many exclaiming, “Who knew you could have so much fun in a research class?” Another student stated, with a particularly memorable comment, “I’ve always liked that song, but it’s actually kind of ‘rapey,’” referring to song lyrics which, at various points, direct the girl to strip down, keep quiet, and surrender in their fight, as he is in control of the situation. In comparing and contrasting their thematic analyses with their peers, they also developed a reflexive understanding of the researcher as instrument in qualitative inquiry (Barroso & Cameron, 2013) and how their own personal history, values, beliefs, and biases can influence their interpretation of open-ended data. This engaging activity is one way that course facilitators teaching qualitative inquiry can connect with their students and encourage praxis as students apply class theory to the world around them.

References


Cameron, C. (2013). Qualitative data analysis. In G. LoBiondo-Wood, J. Haber, C. Cameron, & M.D. Singh (Eds.), Nursing research in Canada: Methods, critical appraisal, and utilization (pp. 331-335). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Elsevier.

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