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## Teaching Qualitative Research: Fostering Student Curiosity through an Arts-Informed Pedagogy

Jennifer Lapum

*Ryerson University*, [jlalum@ryerson.ca](mailto:jlalum@ryerson.ca)

Sarah Hume

*Ryerson University*, [shume@ryerson.ca](mailto:shume@ryerson.ca)

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### Abstract

Creative pedagogical approaches in higher education can facilitate students' journey in thinking like and becoming a qualitative researcher. Pedagogical approaches tend to focus on procedural steps of qualitative research neglecting students' development of cognitive skills and reflective capacity. Arts-informed teaching methods for qualitative research show promise as an educational development in stimulating student interest and expanding their understanding of qualitative research through an experiential approach to learning. In this article, the use of an arts-informed pedagogy to structure a graduate level qualitative research course is discussed. This pedagogy, grounded in experiential teaching-learning theories, was developed to foster students' curiosity as well as their capacity to think like a qualitative researcher through arts media including poetry, dance, film and story. If space is created in the classroom for curiosity to become a disposition and habit of mind, students may be inspired to be perpetually inquisitive and as such, think like a qualitative researcher.

### Keywords

Qualitative Research, Teaching, Pedagogy, Arts-informed Pedagogy, Higher Education, Experiential Learning

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## Teaching Qualitative Research: Fostering Student Curiosity through an Arts-Informed Pedagogy

Jennifer Lapum and Sarah Hume  
Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

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*Creative pedagogical approaches in higher education can facilitate students' journey in thinking like and becoming a qualitative researcher. Pedagogical approaches tend to focus on procedural steps of qualitative research neglecting students' development of cognitive skills and reflective capacity. Arts-informed teaching methods for qualitative research show promise as an educational development in stimulating student interest and expanding their understanding of qualitative research through an experiential approach to learning. In this article, the use of an arts-informed pedagogy to structure a graduate level qualitative research course is discussed. This pedagogy, grounded in experiential teaching-learning theories, was developed to foster students' curiosity as well as their capacity to think like a qualitative researcher through arts media including poetry, dance, film and story. If space is created in the classroom for curiosity to become a disposition and habit of mind, students may be inspired to be perpetually inquisitive and as such, think like a qualitative researcher. Keywords: Qualitative Research, Teaching, Pedagogy, Arts-informed Pedagogy, Higher Education, Experiential Learning.*

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Students entering their first graduate level research course usually have limited knowledge of qualitative research principles and methodologies due to the minimal exposure received in their undergraduate training. As such, qualitative research courses focus on introducing students to the underlying historical and philosophical foundations, familiarizing them with the variety of qualitative methodologies, and developing their capacity to conduct qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie, et al., 2012). Becoming a qualitative researcher involves a transformative process (Barrett, 2007) requiring a shift in thinking (Carawan, Knight, Wittman, Pokorny, & Velde, 2011), and a particular way of seeing and conceptualizing (Morse, 2005). This necessitates teachers' critical examination of pedagogical approaches that will best facilitate students on their journey in thinking like and becoming a qualitative researcher in higher education programs.

Problematic is that there is an underdeveloped body of literature related to the pedagogical approaches specific to qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie, et al., 2012; Waite, 2014). Typically, teachers use foundational literature and exemplar studies to familiarize students with qualitative approaches to research (Barrett, 2007). However, there remains a pedagogical focus on content, process, and methods (Rowe & McAllister, 2002; Stark & Watson, 1999) in which teachers emphasize the procedural steps of doing qualitative research so that there is a set of step-by-step methods to adhere to for students (Polkinghorne, 2006). This procedural focus on technical and methodological concepts has been influenced by the dominant discourse rooted in quantitative research in which the close adherence to method ensures objectivity and enhances validity (Polkinghorne, 2006). However, the transfer of this procedural focus to qualitative research overshadows the development of the researcher's skills in terms of mental processes related to perception, judgment and reasoning (Polkinghorne, 2006). It is suggested that graduate students have more difficulty developing the capacity for interpretive thinking than procedural steps related to the research process

(Butler-Kisber, et al., 2002-2003). Considering that the researcher is the research instrument in qualitative research, his or her sensitivity to participants' responses and context are vital to the inquiry process and thus, these mental processes are important to develop (Polkinghorne, 2006). Additionally, the procedural focus has muted opportunities to foster passion and inspiration in students during the progression of a qualitative research course (Stark & Watson, 1999).

Existing literature in higher education indicates that teaching social science research methods, such as qualitative research, involve didactic approaches as well as pedagogies grounded in experiential learning theories and reflective practice (Kilburn, Nind, & Wiles, 2014). Recent years and educational developments have shown a greater focus on experiential learning approaches where students become immersed in the experience of qualitative research (Aronson Fontes & Piercy, 2000; Holtslander, Racine, Furniss, Burles, & Turner, 2012; Moss & Nesbitt, 2003; Smithbattle, 2014). Experiential teaching-learning theories manifest in pedagogical approaches in which the student is at the centre of learning and prompted to reflect upon and learn from their experiences (Dewey, 1938; Kolb & Kolb, 2012). For example, teachers have developed pedagogical approaches in which students are engaged in the practice of generating, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data (Barrett, 2007). As evidenced in the nursing and medical fields, the use of arts-informed teaching strategies can be an effective medium for experiential teaching and learning (Casey, 2009; de la Croix, Rose, Wildig, & Willson, 2011; Frei, Alvarez, & Alexander, 2010).

The existing literature on arts-informed teaching methods for qualitative research, while limited, shows promise in demonstrating how the arts stimulates interest and expands students' understanding of qualitative research. Through interpretation of media such as music and poetry, students have been introduced to the complexities of qualitative research and the significance of perception while learning to analyze and interpret data (Barrett, 2007; Bresler, 2009; Raingruber, 2009). Film has also been used to effectively engage students in the learning process, presenting qualitative research concepts such as qualitative inquiry and analysis in an accessible format (Edmonds, 2013; Leblanc, 1998; Saldana, 2009; Tan & Ko, 2004). Teachers have also engaged students' imagination through metaphors to spark their interest in qualitative research (Porter, 2000), demonstrate alternative frames of reference (Cook & Gordon, 2004), and teach reflexivity (Gerstl-Pepin & Patrizio, 2009; McAllister & Rowe, 2003). Additional arts-informed initiatives applied in teaching qualitative research include drawing, cartooning, sculpture, photography, storytelling, and haiku writing (Carawan, et al., 2011). These examples reveal how the arts provide an appealing format for experiential learning where students engage in critical thinking, discussion, and reflection, and are able to find meaning in course content.

### **Arts-informed Pedagogy: Structuring a Qualitative Research Course**

In this article, the use of an arts-informed pedagogy to structure a graduate level qualitative research course is discussed. This pedagogy was specifically developed by the first author with the purpose to foster students' curiosity as well as their capacity to think like a qualitative researcher. The arts-informed pedagogy employed in this course is grounded in experiential teaching-learning theories. Specifically, four arts-informed teaching-learning approaches are presented that draw upon arts media including poetry, dance, film and story.

### **Poetry: What Can Qualitative Research Uniquely Offer?**

Students generally enter graduate programs with a basic understanding of quantitative research and an even more rudimentary understanding of qualitative research. Using a

reflective activity and poetry, an experiential learning opportunity works to draw upon students' knowledge of quantitative research to extend their thinking and understanding of qualitative research. The activity provides students insight into the type of data that can emerge with both types of research and specifically, what qualitative research uniquely offers.

The phenomenon of death is used as the substantive background to frame this activity considering that it is of personal significance to most people (Riley, 1982). A question is posed to students based on a survey study about the attitudes towards death including the frequency of thinking about dying (Riley, 1982). On the blackboard or chart paper, the following question is written: "How often do you think about the uncertainty of your own life or the death of someone close to you?" (Riley, 1982, p. 34). Students are asked to put a checkmark beside the answer that applies to them. As per the original survey (Riley, 1982), they have three options to choose from including "often," "occasionally," or "hardly ever/never." After they have done this, a second question is disclosed to them, which is qualitatively informed: "Think about death in your own life (past deaths or anticipated deaths) and write a few words or a sentence that captures your thoughts/feelings." Students are asked to write their answer on a sticky note and then stick it on the blackboard/chart paper.

The following component of the activity attempts to further students' reflections and promote learning from one another through dialogical discussions. Students are asked to examine and reflect on the classes' answers and think about the type of data elicited through the two types of questions. In comparison to the quantitative data, students indicate how the qualitative question resulted in rich descriptions and a contextual understanding about thoughts of death. During the latter part of these discussions, a poem that was composed by the course professor (ie. the first author) based on the qualitative question noted above is recited to students, highlighting how death can shape living and how the things that provide us comfort can be transformed by the abstraction and reality of death (Lapum, 2008). The poem is titled "Residuals of Death", one stanza reads:

the books line the shelf with gold engraved scribble across their binding  
and the shavings of dust made present with each turn of the page  
an ostensibly permanent presence that goes unnoticed –  
until its absence (Lapum, 2008, p. 234).

The experiential component of this activity, combined with a poetry reading, allows for students to discuss and understand in a tangible way the type of data that can emerge with qualitative research without polarizing the two methodologies. The activity is particularly instrumental in highlighting the subjective and contextual elements as well as the thick descriptions associated with qualitative research (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). The activity could be repeated as outlined or recreated using a different arts medium other than poetry and based on a phenomenon other than death.

### **Dance: Shifting to Interpretive Thinking**

As a qualitative course progresses, one aim is to facilitate students' capacity to shift their thinking to interpretivism. This activity is grounded in a discussion of the historical views of science and a critique of Descartes' idea of an objective reality; this facilitates students' shift to understand the interpretive nature of perception in understanding human phenomena (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). The related activity commences with a discussion of the statement that "the researcher ... is the instrument" (Richardson, 2000, p. 925). Often,

this statement requires some level of deconstruction with students. What does it mean to be an instrument of research in the context of interpretivism? Deconstructing the researcher as instrument is critical considering that all researchers are shaped by a set of philosophical principles that influence what they see and how they make meaning of it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Thus, the interpretive nature of qualitative research requires researchers to conscientiously engage in a subjective perception of another person's experience within the context of their own experience (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011).

The medium of dance is employed in this activity to assist students to understand interpretivism, highlighting the difference between objective observation and subjective perception. Of course it can be critiqued that all observation involves perception, which further informs the later class discussions. The contemporary dance by Roy Assaf (2012) titled "Six Years Later" is employed in this activity. Pieces of paper are handed out to each student. Half of the class (group one) receives a piece of paper that elicits their observations, stating: "When you watch this dance, write down exactly what you observe - be objective and make no assumptions." The other half of the class (group two) receives a piece of paper that elicits their perceptions, stating: "When you watch this dance, write down your understanding of what is going on." None of the students are aware of what is written on each other's piece of paper.

After watching the dance, students in group one are asked to share their writings first and then, group two. If needed, students are prompted to consider the differences between group one and two. However, as students recite what they wrote, a discussion often naturally ensues about these differences as well as what they chose to write and how they decided what to write. The students' reflections lead into a discussion about the differences between observation and perception. Integrating dance as a pedagogical activity facilitates an experiential understanding of interpretivism by engaging students' senses and reflections as well as opening up a dialogue about objective observations and subjective perception. Assaf's (2012) *Six Years Later* is particularly useful as it incites curiosity and prompts the audience to imagine the story told through the medium of dance. Also, the aesthetic experience of watching a dance is influenced by feelings and memories (Cross & Ticini, 2012), particularly when students are asked to focus on their perceptions. Although any art form may be used in this activity, dance is particularly useful because it evokes multiple senses including the visual and auditory (Cross & Ticini, 2012). Like other aesthetic experiences provoked through the arts, dance provides an opening into the cognitive understanding of the principles of qualitative research such as interpretivism.

### **Film: Developing an Overall Understanding of Qualitative Research**

A documentary film, "The Stories We Tell" directed by Sarah Polley (2012), is used to facilitate students' understanding of, and the capacity to apply qualitative research principles in this course. The film acts as a basis for discussion in three sequential classes related to topics including research methodology, research process, ethics, rigour and reflexivity. As the filmmaker and main character in the film, Polley investigates a family's secrets and the elusive truth about her paternal heritage (Polley, 2012). To provide some guidance, students are told to watch the film and consider it as a research study in which Polley is the researcher.

Early on in the qualitative course, the film is used to assist students to understand various qualitative research methodologies. Prior to the class, students watch the film and complete a series of readings related to research methodology; thus, they come to the class with a general understanding of research methodology. Simulating a research team, the class is divided into small working groups of four to six students, and each group is assigned a

methodology (e.g., phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative, etc.). The following discussion questions are posed to students in the context of their assigned research methodology: 1) What research phenomenon is Polley studying? 2) How is the study methodology demonstrated in the film? 3) How would you further tailor the study (ie. the film) so that it is more congruent with the research methodology? After a 15 to 20 minute discussion in their small groups, students present their findings to the class. Both small group and large class discussions are further advanced by the teacher's questions such as: "How did you determine this?" and, "How did the required readings inform your decisions?" These reflective questions prompt students to carefully examine their own thinking and decision-making.

In the following week's class, the film acts as a basis to understand and apply weekly content related to the qualitative research process. Prior to this class, students complete the required readings related to the research process. The class begins with students working in their small working groups to discuss the following: 1) Write an example of the research purpose and questions exhibited in the film 2) What is the research setting? 3) Who are the participants and how were they sampled? 4) What are the inclusion and exclusion criteria? 5) What data collection technique(s) were used? 6) How would you have modified the study (ie. the film) to enhance the research process? (e.g., what would you have done differently as the researcher in order to answer the research question?). After 20 minutes in small groups, a large class discussion is initiated to discuss the above questions. In the larger discussion, students are encouraged to explain their reasoning and draw upon the readings to support their answers.

In the next class, the film is the basis for discussion related to topics including research ethics, rigour and reflexivity. Students complete required readings related to these topics prior to the class. In a large class discussion, students are asked about the presence of ethical issues in the research (ie. the film). Drawing upon the required readings, the teacher probes with questions such as: 1) What are the ethical issues specific to an emergent design? 2) What ethical issues are related to principles of autonomy and welfare of the participants? 3) What ethical issues exist related to the researcher-participant relationship? The latter question leads to a discussion about reflexivity. Students are asked about how reflexivity was demonstrated in the research-film and how it could be modified to enhance rigour based on course readings. Drawing upon ideas from the required readings, the teacher probes about ideas related to voice (Lincoln, 1995), verification strategies (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002), triangulation (Creswell, 2007; Streubert & Carpenter, 2011), aesthetic merit (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), and Lincoln & Guba's (1985) criteria related to credibility, authenticity, dependability, confirmability and transferability. To further deepen the discussions, students are asked whether criteria of rigour should be contingent on the methodology used in a study.

The use of film in the context of a qualitative research course can enhance students' learning and creative thinking in a number of ways. Film as a pedagogical medium stimulates engagement in a dialogical format so that students critically think and apply the course readings. Using film as the basis for discussion provides a portal in which students can understand and examine abstract and new concepts. Additionally, students often indicate that the use of film provides clear and concrete examples in which they could apply their developing knowledge of qualitative research. Overall, the use of film as part of an arts-informed pedagogy provides space for students to hone their own inquisitive disposition and the fostering of cognitive skills related to judgment, critical thinking and decision-making.

### **Story: Exercising the Cognitive Thinking of Qualitative Analysis**

For this activity, the first author created an abbreviated story drawn from Eva Markvoort's online blog, titled 65 Red Roses; Markvoort journals her thoughts on living with Cystic Fibrosis through prose, poetry and images from 2006 to 2010 (65redroses, n.d.a). As part of an arts-informed pedagogy, the story is used for an experiential activity to facilitate students' cognitive capacity for qualitative analysis. Drawing from her blog (65redroses, n.d.b), a brief introduction is composed about Eva so that other teachers have a preliminary sense of her story. The introduction describes how during the course of Eva's disease, she required a lung transplant and was put on a wait list. Additionally, it is noted that Eva does receive a lung transplant, recovers and returns home. However, over time she experiences organ rejection and eventually dies. The foci of this introduction are a chronological layout of the events in her life, but it neglects the experiential component of her narrative, which can be accessed through her blog. She was an artistic and optimistic person with the personal mantra: "love, love, love" (Markvoort, 2006-2010a). Throughout her life, she became well known as an organ donor advocate and was involved in a documentary that was about her experience of being an organ donor recipient (Mukerji & Lyall, 2012).

To begin, students are told that they should assume the role of research team members in which the hypothetical research purpose for this activity is: "to explore the experience of living with Cystic Fibrosis." Prior to reciting a part of Eva's story, a short didactic lecture is given to reinforce the general principles of qualitative analysis based on the required readings for that week. Students are introduced to the first step of analysis involving a preliminary read of the data in which they should attempt to develop an overall sense of the story prior to focusing on discrete segments (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2007). During this step, they are encouraged to write memos (e.g., short notes or general ideas about the data) (Creswell, 2007). In step two, they are asked to look closely and systematically at smaller segments of the data and label meaningful ideas, called codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2007). During this step, they are encouraged to read the data line-by-line. After they have completed step two and have a list of codes, they move on to step three in which they are asked to search for themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Step three involves clustering several related codes under one broad theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Finally, for step four, interpretation, researchers attempt to make meaning of the data particularly in the context of the existing literature (Creswell, 2007) and as it relates to the research purpose and question.

After introducing students to an overview of qualitative analysis, students are provided a hard-copy of Eva's abbreviated story. The students take turns in reading Eva's story aloud. The story includes prose, poetry and images taken from Eva's blog. For feasibility of fitting this lesson into one class, an abbreviated story is used in which selections of Eva's story are taken from five of her blog entries dated: May 18, 2007; January 24, 2010; February 18, 2010; February 27, 2010; March 25, 2010 (65redroses, n.d.b). This selection documents Eva's experience of Cystic Fibrosis including waiting for and receiving a lung transplant; her passion, struggles and triumphs; and the last entry prior to her death. A selection from the first entry that the class reads is:

Every time the phone rings I think it's the transplant team trying to get ahold of me...I have this irrational fear of unanswered phones...let us be a match. I want to start LIVING AGAIN. I feel like I'm living a shadow of my real life (Markvoort, 2006-2010b).

Another entry from her blog captures her personal mantra:



I'm afraid I'm not as strong as I make myself out to be. But I'm still here. And right about now. That's strong as strong can be. I do still love love love (Markvoort, 2006-2010c).

A selection from the last entry that the class reads is:

I'm done with the poetics. Asking for help. My sister is helping me write. Actually helping me write...I'm drowning in the medications...I can't breathe. Something has to change (Markvoort, 2006-2010d)

Although these provide a limited overview of her story, the five full entries were chosen because they incorporate a diversity of her experiences.

As part of the preliminary read of step one of the analytic process, students are asked the following questions: what memos did you write? What is your overall sense of the story? Class discussions are further probed by asking: Why did you write those specific memos? Do other class members agree or have alternative memos? These probing questions allow students to engage in the dialogical and team approach to analysis as they discuss their memos and explain their underlying thinking. In step two, the codes that students assign to sections of the data are discussed. The teacher's probing questions include: How did you decide what to name the code? Did you use an *in vivo* name? Did others code it in a similar or different way? How do we decide as a team to agree on certain codes? What are our definitions of these codes? These questions mirror the process of analysis that can happen among a research team and can also lead the class to a beginning discussion of rigour. In step three, a discussion ensues about what codes are related and thus, how to classify the codes into themes. This discussion includes what a reasonable number of themes may be and how the themes should be defined. Last, in step four, students are encouraged to reflect back on the research question and consider what conclusions they can draw. Although they may not be familiar with the literature related to this research phenomenon, the class considers the potential links between the data and the existing literature.

Other stories could be used to frame the basis of this learning activity. However, the diversity of media used in Eva's story (prose, poetry and images) was useful in exposing students to various forms of data. This learning activity is effective in assisting students to engage in the cognitive process of analysis and finding meaning in data. Additionally, the activity assists students to understand abstract and complex ideas related to qualitative data analysis. Overall, students often find it to be a creative way to help them learn and apply the required readings. Students are actively engaged in the analytic process during this experiential activity as it prompts them to ask questions about analytic principles while they attempt to make sense and apply them to Eva's story.

## Discussion

The use of an arts-informed pedagogy in this qualitative research course echoes others' experiences which suggest that the arts have an inherent attribute that draws one in, invites query and curiosity, and prompts the audience/viewer to ask questions (Casey, 2009; McAllister & Rowe, 2003). Most people can recall an art form that has elicited some level of this engagement and query. For some, it may be Paul Vermeersch's poem *Porcelain Horses* that imparts ideas related to illness, hope and despair, or it may be the song *Hate Me* by Blue October that plays with ideas of self-hate, mental illness and suicide or Kurton Weston's self-portraits that illustrate the emotional journey of becoming blind. Along the same lines, the

use of an arts-informed pedagogy in a qualitative research classroom acts in ways to captivate the student, inspire and foster curiosity, and stimulate discussion.

In higher education, the pedagogical significance of student engagement and curiosity is two-fold. First, the educational process is central to acquiring knowledge, ultimately affecting how students view and use qualitative inquiry (Rowe & McAllister, 2002). Thus, the qualitative educational experience needs to be inspiring and engaging for students (Rowe & McAllister, 2002) so that they are interested in developing and refining the associated cognitive processes of a qualitative researcher (Polkinghorne, 2006). Through engagement, arts-informed teaching strategies can overcome barriers to learning by opening up students to new ways of viewing qualitative concepts and enabling students to make creative and imaginative connections between existing and new knowledge (Cook & Gordon, 2004). Second, the inspiration and fostering of curiosity in the classroom can facilitate students' capacity to develop a critical attribute of what it means to think and act like a qualitative researcher. A fundamental attribute of the qualitative researcher is curiosity as one seeks to discover something about another person or a phenomenon (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). As reflected in this course, arts-informed pedagogical approaches to qualitative research can cultivate curiosity so that students engage in and are positioned to inquire and probe. Creative and imaginative teaching strategies can provoke this curiosity and eagerness in students (Rowe & McAllister, 2002). Consistent with this qualitative course are other examples of arts-informed teaching strategies such as examining poetry, paintings, music, and film that have been shown to incite curiosity in qualitative inquiry (Barrett, 2007; Carawan, et al., 2011; Edmonds, 2013; McAllister & Rowe, 2003; Raingruber, 2009; Saldana, 2009). Of utmost significance, arts-informed pedagogy in this course mimicked the discovery process of inquiry through student curiosity. Arts-informed activities extend students' understanding of what it means to be a qualitative researcher, which is essential as the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research (Barrett, 2007; Janesick, 2001; Richardson, 2000).

Students are able to gain a deeper understanding of the self in the role of qualitative researcher through experiential learning opportunities facilitated by the arts. The arts provide numerous opportunities for experiential learning where one can be entirely in the experience (Lawrence, 2008), and it has been suggested that to best learn qualitative research students need to experience it (Aronson, et al., 2000). Although some qualitative research topics (such as the history of the discipline) can be introduced through textbooks and lectures, other topics need to be experienced by the students (Delyser, 2008). In agreement, the use of an arts-informed pedagogy in this course extended course readings and lectures by providing students hands-on and reflective experiences of qualitative concepts and processes related to data collection, analysis, interpretivism, rigour, and reflexivity. Embedded in an experiential approach, arts-informed pedagogy in this qualitative research course reiterated the work of others who have found that it stimulated critical reflection (Carawan et al., 2011) and a reflective mindset (Raingruber, 2009). Through arts-informed teaching methods, students are naturally led to reflect on their perceptions, question assumptions, and examine alternative views (Gerstl-Pepin, & Patrizio, 2009; Casey, 2009). As such, experiential teaching-learning processes (facilitated through the arts in the case of this course) facilitate students' capacity to absorb the ways of seeing, thinking, and acting like a qualitative researcher (Smithbattle, 2014).

Students' experiential learning opened up discussion in this qualitative research classroom, naturally leading to a dialogical teaching-learning experience and the simulation of a research team. Parallel to the work of others (Saldana, 2009; Tan & Ko, 2004), the use of arts-informed teaching strategies in this course acted as a powerful agent for classroom discussion to further advance students' understanding of qualitative research. The arts-informed learning activities enable students to simulate a research team, where they are

required to work together in the process of qualitative inquiry, stimulating students' questioning and examination of their own interpretations. As Sorrell et al. (2014) indicate, this shared dialogue provides context for students to reflect on new learning and address conflicting assumptions and perceptions. Dialogue also promotes critical inquiry and enables students to consider alternative perspectives (MacDonnell & MacDonald, 2011). The aim of a qualitative research course is to help students analyze and develop their own particular worldviews, assumptions, and values (McAllister and Rowe, 2003) while learning from one another in expanding their understanding of qualitative research concepts.

Echoing the work of others, arts-informed pedagogy enables creative approaches to facilitate students' learning of complex and theoretical concepts by drawing upon something that they are already familiar with such as the arts (McAllister & Rowe, 2003). Extending this idea, arts media provides an accessible, common knowledge base (Leblanc, 1998) while simultaneously highlighting the complexities of qualitative research (Tan & Ko, 2004). Popular films have been used directly to teach complex qualitative concepts (Saldana, 2009; Tan & Ko, 2004) and also leveraged to construct metaphors that help students grasp abstract concepts such as reflexivity (Gerstle-Pepin & Patrizio, 2009). Metaphors have repeatedly been used in qualitative research education to connect abstract concepts to more concrete and familiar ideas (McAllister & Rowe, 2003; Cook & Gordon, 2004; Gerstle-Pepin & Patrizio, 2009; Janesick, 2001; Porter, 2000). In this course, dance was used as a medium for shifting to interpretive thinking, but this can be accomplished through other art forms. For example, Raingruber (2009) found that poetry accelerated students' understanding of interpretive analysis. Hence, the flexibility and expansiveness of the arts provide limitless opportunities to help students make sense of challenging qualitative research concepts through things they already know and understand.

Less understood, but interestingly so, the use of an arts-informed pedagogy in this course expanded students' ways of knowing and connecting with the concepts. Although not positioned in a qualitative course, Mitchell et al. (2011) found that the use of research-based drama provides a visceral and embodied connection to knowing for audience members. Similarly, in this course students noted their own bodily and emotional experiences when listening to the poetry recited or watching Roy Assaf's dance. For example, students noted becoming aware of their breathing and identified feelings of sadness and despair. As others have found, arts-informed methods have the capacity to engage and exercise students' senses to enhance engagement and learning (Stark & Watson, 1999), as well as encourage critical thinking and inquiry through a cognitive and emotional journey (Casey, 2009; Lapum, Hamzavi, et al., 2012). This sense-based learning experience may position students to be more effective inquirers in the qualitative domain as they become familiar with and experienced at using their many senses in research. These ideas have been explicated further in this course specifically in terms of how arts-informed pedagogy opens up the opportunity for students to engage in a deep consideration of self and reflective practice.

## Conclusion

In moving forth this pedagogy in higher education, it will be interesting to explore the use of arts-informed teaching approaches in qualitative research in a myriad of disciplinary contexts, as well as examine the links with experiential learning. As reflected in this course, arts-informed pedagogy provides an experiential learning opportunity for students to simulate the work of research teams and apply complex qualitative concepts such as interpretive thinking and analytic skills. Arts-informed pedagogy employed creative approaches that were engaging for students and stimulated their critical thinking, reflection and application of abstract concepts in an accessible format. The arts-informed pedagogy in this qualitative

course fostered a space for students to engage in inquisitive inquiry and thus, cultivate their curiosity. In the qualitative research realm, perpetual curiosity can lead to the process of knowing and understanding (Lapum, Ruttonsha, Church, Yau, & Matthews David, 2012). Although many teaching methods can enhance student learning, arts-informed pedagogy works in ways so that curiosity may continue as a perpetual and flexible habit of mind. As Polkinghorne (2006) asserts, pedagogies should not focus on the mechanical steps of inquiry, but provide students with experiential opportunities where dispositions consistent with qualitative research are cultivated and the associated cognitive skills are practiced. If we create a space in the qualitative research classroom for curiosity to become a habit of mind, students may be inspired to be perpetually inquisitive and as such, think like a qualitative researcher.

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### Author Note

Dr. Jennifer Lapum is an Associate Professor at Ryerson University. As a poet and arts-based researcher, she uses arts media in the health sciences to advance capacity for humanistic approaches to health care. She has developed an arts-informed pedagogy to facilitate experiential approaches to learning in nursing and qualitative research.

Ms. Sarah Hume has a Bachelor of Commerce in Entrepreneurial Management and is currently a student in her final year of the Ryerson University Collaborative Nursing Degree Program. In working as a project coordinator, she has developed interests in arts-informed research and creative technologies and pedagogies.

Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: Jennifer Lapum at, Associate Professor, Ryerson University, Faculty of Community Services, 350 Victoria Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5B 2K3; E-Mail: [jlapum@ryerson.ca](mailto:jlapum@ryerson.ca); Phone: 416-979-5000 ex. 6316.

Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: Sarah Hume at, Student, Research Coordinator, Ryerson University, Faculty of Community Services, 350 Victoria Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5B 2K3; E-Mail: [shume@ryerson.ca](mailto:shume@ryerson.ca).

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