

USING POETIC INQUIRY FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH SEMINAR

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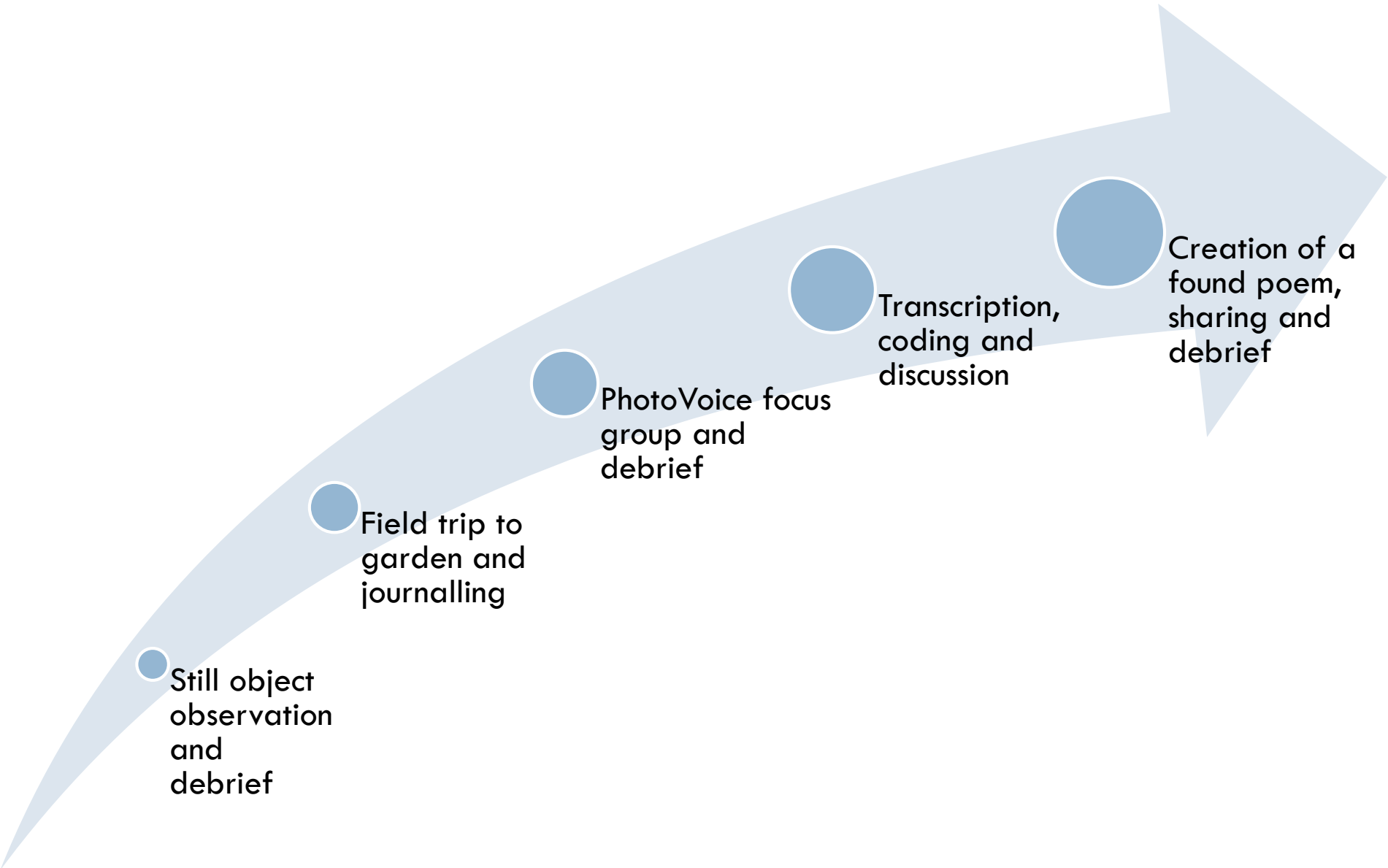
Context: Qualitative research seminar

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- Cross-listed graduate seminar offered in School of Population and Public Health and Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program
- Offered for over 15 years, consistently ranked by students as one of most valuable courses ever taken
- Cohort of 19 Masters and PhD students, many with little or no previous experience with qualitative research and desire to complement quantitative expertise

“Learning is understood as a *moment of emotional and physical response [to experience]* not a moment of dispassionate self-reflection, as the product of an embodied, social selfhood rather than a disembodied mind.”

Michelson E. (1998). “Re-Membering: The return of the body to experiential learning.” *Studies in Continuing Education*. 20(2):217-233.



Still object
observation
and
debrief

Field trip to
garden and
journalling

PhotoVoice focus
group and
debrief

Transcription,
coding and
discussion

Creation of a
found poem,
sharing and
debrief



Experiential activities

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- Focus group held the week after the field trip to Nitobe Garden
- Audio-recorded with permission of students
- Each student shared one photo from the garden (projected on screen) and described in narrative form what the photo meant to them
- Students transcribed their own portions of the focus group and created a found poem from the text to share at the next class
- Consent provided to use photos and poems in research on scholarship of teaching & learning

Creating found poetry

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- Found poetry can be created from any type of text
- Rules are very simple and usually require that poem is created only from words that appear in the text with no additions
- Punctuation, line breaks and spacing on the page are all important aspects of the poem's form



S-03

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I actually took this photo by placing my camera down on the ground beside a patch, in the garden where I was sitting, and I was amazed to see how [short pause] there was almost this little tiny environment existing there. And, uh, it turns out that this, uh, is a phase of moss, which, [short pause] resembles almost little tiny trees and within the moss, which is this v-very vibrant green, there are, uhm, some very bright pink and brown stems that stick out. And so I love how the light hit these stems and made them a pink colour to contrast with the green, and they are colours that are very whimsical and very spring- like, and th-the whole picture itself really made me think about growth and regeneration. (S-03)

Microenvironments,
it makes you think
surrounded?
larger than you, life

On the ground I was
sitting,
amazed to see
this little environment
existing
there

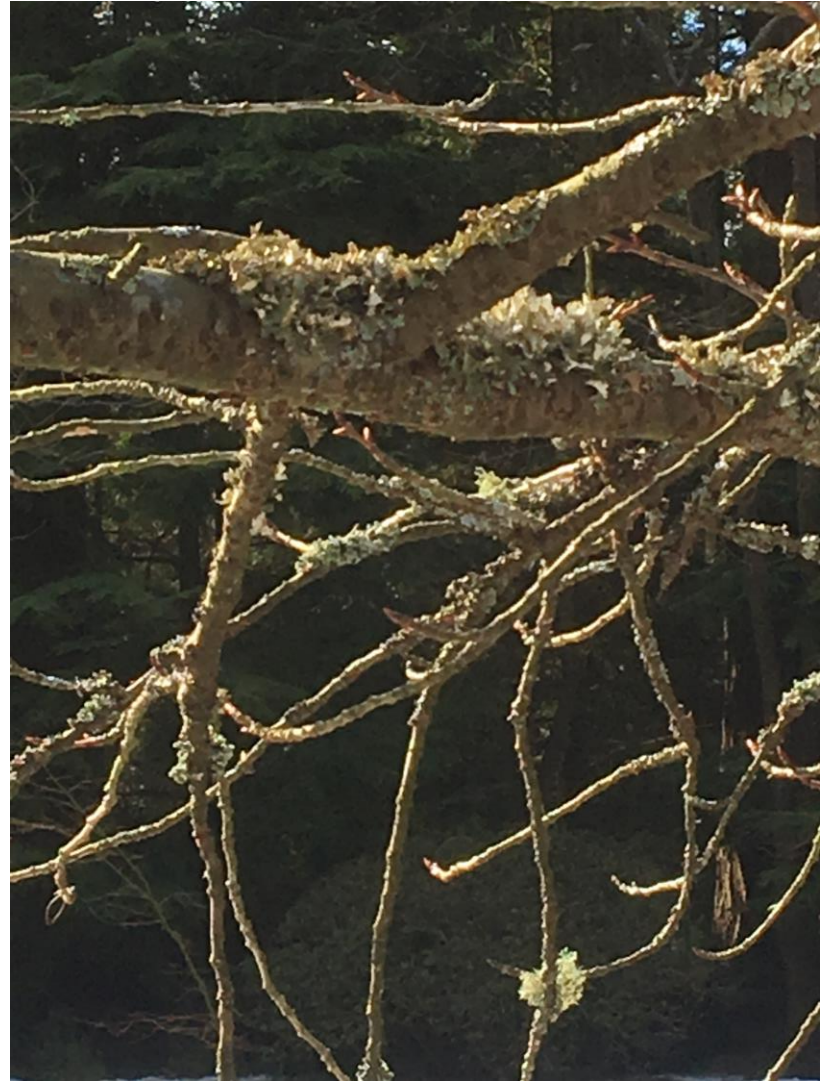


A phase of moss,
tiny trees
vibrant green
bright pink
brown
colours that are
whimsical
spring-like

Think about,
growth
regeneration
contrast
the pinecone like a seed
the garden, rebirth

Regeneration, generations

expectation
waiting
we were just on the verge
this tree and its bare bones
green clothing on top



S-02

Experiential learning assessment

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- Observation of self-learning process as students engaged in activities
- Class discussion about activities to elicit reflections
- Weekly student journaling and reflections completed after each class and evaluations at end of course
- Instructors' debrief and reflections from teaching course over last 15 years

The power of poetic inquiry

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“I pleasantly surprised to find how much the poem helped me to understand my experience in the garden better and helped me to articulate some of my thoughts about the experience.”

(S12, RR9)

Discovering creativity

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“I have never considered myself a creative person but this poetry exercise has changed that.”

(S8, RR9)

Collective learning

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“I found it very interesting to hear others' interpretations of the poems, and people brought up things about my poem that I had not previously considered or intentionally included in my poem.” (S15, RR9)

Why use poetic inquiry in teaching qualitative research?

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- Importance of developing intuition
- Attending closely to emotion and embodied knowledge
- Opportunity for engaging all of the senses
- Learning and practicing specific skills (e.g., how to observe closely)
- Realizing the value of reflection and how to do it
- Cultivation of creativity, imagination, playfulness

Challenges

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- Class size
- Need to create a safe environment because it can be hard for students to take risks
- Need for instructor to model vulnerability and share experience of risk-taking
- Hard for some students to concentrate with more traditional modes of learning after the experiential learning activity (It was too much fun!)

Thanks for your attention!
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