Taking the Quantum Leap:
Arts-Based Learning as a Gateway into Exploring Transition for Senior Nursing Students

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Abstract:
In a senior-baccalaureate nursing program, a student's journey of transition to becoming a Registered Nurse is fraught with institutional and relational tensions. In a fourth-year capstone theory course focused on issues and trends in nursing leadership, we explored these tensions through arts-based learning activities. Through the theoretical lens of Janzen's (2013) Quantum Perspective of Learning, reflective narratives illuminated student experiences of the transition and into the unknown. Our goal to inspire, to nurture, and to empower students to take their own quantum leaps took them into finite career spaces and the infinite spaces in-between and beyond.

Keywords: creative arts-based strategies, Quantum Perspective of Learning, transition, transformation, nursing, provoking curriculum

Introduction

*F*or most individuals, moving through liminal spaces can be fraught with tensions of worry, insecurity, and trepidation, as well as anticipation for what lies ahead. In their capstone leadership course, fourth-year nursing students are tired and often express being *burned out,* at the same time retaining a glimmer or degree of hope and excitement as they near finishing their degrees. As their instructors, we saw these tensions on a weekly basis as students arrived for eight o'clock to attend workshop-style lectures, which lasted from five to eight hours. This led us into spaces of deep reflection, planning, and preparation in order to help our students (and ourselves) to successfully (and transformatively) move through the 10-week course. We taught with an aim of engagement, reflection, and critical thinking while infusing an element of play. We purposefully provoked the curriculum through the use of creative arts-based activities. This provocation enlivened the journey of nurses learning leadership in-between *what is actually happening* in professional practice and the students' visions for their future and the future of the practice discipline.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the tensions that exist in students (and ourselves) as we live into (and through) the in-between space of being (and yet not being), fatigue (and yet energy), and transformation (and yet potential stagnation), within the phase of becoming a leader and a Registered Nurse (RN). The Quantum Perspective of Learning or QL (Janzen, 2013; Janzen, Perry & Edwards, 2011, 2012a, 2012b) provided a theoretical foundation to connect with some of the core course concepts of authenticity, self-expression, critical thought, and reflective practice. Poetry, influenced by online class discussion, written by the authors, is included to not only support our thinking and reflection, but to also resonate with the reader as he or she ponders upon the reflections offered. Creative arts-based strategies require an element of adapting traditional arts-based strategies to enliven the mind in new ways—particularly the senses. This, then, provides a holistic experience for the students. They can be described as a bridge to learning with students rather than passive, one-way learning, as students enrich the lives of themselves, their peers, and our lives as educators. Poetic representations are to embody reflection, learning, emotion/affect, and growth.

Background

Philosophical Foundations: The Quantum Perspective of Learning

The Quantum Perspective of Learning (QL) (Janzen, 2013; Janzen, Perry & Edwards, 2011; 2012a; 2012b) provokes learning by taking the most salient parts of existing learning theory and circumscribing them into a theory. Instead of learning being flat, one-dimensional and with concrete starting and ending points, QL is envisioned as being infinite in nature. Learning, from this perspective, has always existed throughout time, extends from the earliest periods in-utero to the end of life, and is the culmination of both inputs and outputs that are the very essences of life.

As described by Katherine Janzen, Beth Perry, and Margaret Edwards (2011), QL is based upon five assumptions:

1. Learning is multidimensional.
2. Learning occurs in various planes simultaneously.
3. Learning consists of potentialities that exist infinitely.
4. Learning is both holistic and holographic and is patterned within holographic realities.
5. Learning environments are living systems. (p. 64)

Originally developed as a theory to explain online learning, Janzen, Perry, and Edwards (2011) propose that the original seven principles fit equally as well with on-site and blended learning:

1. Learning needs to be multidimensionally constructed. If humans are holistic beings, then learning must be able to reach the learners' multiple dimensions.
2. Learning must occur in various planes or dimensions in order to access holistic development. Reaching the learner in one quantum dimension (i.e., cognitive or social) is not sufficient to promote learning that extends beyond the confines of the classroom.
3. Humans have infinite potential to learn and develop in all dimensions, accessing this learning for life.
4. Human potential is ubiquitous and unlimited by time and space.
5. Instructional design should encourage learners to reach beyond time and space, into holographic realities with interaction between and among learners, instructors, the learning environment, and technology.
6. Learning environments are dynamic living systems that grow, evolve, and develop through the passage of time and space, supporting the needs of learners, instructors, and institutions.
7. Learning can result in transformation for teachers, learners, and the educational environment, through which technology is also transformed. (pp. 64–65)

QL utilizes creative arts-based strategies first pioneered by Perry (2006) and further studied in online and blended learning environments (Edwards, Perry, Janzen & Menzies, 2012; Janzen, Perry & Edwards, 2012a; 2012b; Janzen, 2013; Perry & Edwards, 2010a; 2010b; Perry, Edwards & Janzen, 2014). Our reflections on QL within nursing leadership courses necessarily emerge from three distinct voices, our varied experiences of bridging *lived curriculum* (Aoki, 1993/2005), and the multiple and diverse influences that have shaped our teaching practices. As we collected our teaching stories, we were acutely aware of shadowing the language and texts of multiple influences that expand these pedagogical discourses, which we offer as threads to the reader to muse about and consider during their own reflexive journey.

Reflection: The Angst

Teaching and learning about nursing leadership depends on relational awareness and the trust that ultimately supports leadership capacity. Whether we are encouraged to *flip* the classroom (McLaughlin, et al., 2014; Missildine et al., 2013), use story-based learning (MacKinnon & Young, 2014), problem-based learning (Kong, et al., 2014) or other strategies to explore critical thinking and clinical reasoning, there is so much more that happens in that shared space. In our course, the atmosphere was heavy with the burden of professional ethics (standardized notions of risk management and safety) (Makaroff, et al., 2014), the developmental stage (maturation) of students through the program, and the reality of compulsory assignments and other work/life commitments. There were also well intentioned silences that weighed heavily on our structured time (O'Reilley, 1998) and the space that begged to be opened with natural light and colour, amidst considerations of our social and ecological responsibilities (Burns, 2011). So it was that our sense of mimetic, organic, and rhythmic play (Nachmanovitch, 1990; Trueit, 2006) was rendered within these complexities through our creative arts-based learning activities. Along with the laughter and the tears that came from our unexpected moments of being human, connected, unique, authentic, and genuine; we toiled in the ambiguity of our privilege and negotiations of power, holding our professional roles in precarious balance (Gordon & Nelson, 2005).

Students brought shadows of fatigue and resignation from the political and economic burdens of their university studies and from all they witnessed in the health-care system where they practiced. We held this tension in our own hearts and in our learning spaces, acknowledging these dimensions with delicate care in the folds of our dialogue. We discussed the numerous trending scholarly papers regarding *moral distress, compassion fatigue*, *burn-out*, *horizontal violence*, and many other iterations of evidence that perpetuate the ethical burden that is seeping into nursing practice and our collective psyche.

We considered how much of what manifests itself in the classroom comes from our critical instigation versus some other drivers, such as the standardized forms of testing for the professional nurse and the changing roles of RNs from care providers to case managers. Are our critical conversations *too little too late* for a volatile institutional landscape that no longer requires any semblance of what we are provoking in these becoming-RNs who face perpetual transition?

In our analyses we could not separate ourselves from our own perpetual transitions in pedagogy and theoretical shifts within the discipline and profession. We were cognizant that these critical dialogues were not part of the curricular plan we were expected to teach. For us, these were rhizomatic nuances between relational affected bodies such as those invoked by Deleuze (Ahmed, 2004; Boler, 1999; Massumi, 2010; Semetsky, 2009), and which exemplified the complex educational landscapes, mediated through and by technology, of nursing leadership and nursing education (Ellsworth, 2005)*.*

As nurse educators, we are constantly in danger of dis(member)ing corporeal bodies in virtual and physical space (Grosz, 1994; Moss & Dyck, 2002; Shildrick, 1997; Wendell, 1996) when aiming to teach solely to the profession through lecture material or simulated laboratory experiences. Bringing critiques of ableism, ageism, determinism, and gendered work (for example) into the classroom challenges the preconceived notion that a nursing theory course at the fourth-year level has nothing important or new to offer. Nursing students are expected to be proficient at prioritising, organising, and managing their time to handle complex patient assignments orientated to *work readiness* at the fourth year level. The message from those in professional practice is that becoming-RNs should be prepared to *hit the ground running* when they graduate (Murphy & Calaway, 2008; Oermann, 2004; Scott, Keehner & Swanson, 2008). Using creative arts-based learning activities to attend to what is actually happening in practice within these disjunctures is both daunting and necessary.

Notions of *leadership* can get bogged down by *styles* and personality tests, but the values and visions we co-create have potential to manifest the courage or heart that Carl Leggo (2005) speaks of, which is necessary for critical dialogue about trends and issues in nursing. Does transgressive wisdom (hooks, 1994) get lost in translation, lost in execution, or are we just at a loss for words, when we need to penetrate what is most important in this difficult journey of the complex professional and disciplinary visions faced by becoming-RNs? The following poem, written by Joanna Szabo, offers the parallel poetry presented to a current class from the previous year cohort's amalgamated discussion-board dialogues. Parallel poetry consists of students writing a parallel poem to a poem that their instructor has written (Janzen, 2013). It was a way to represent the shifting trends and ongoing tensions from another class at another time, generating new dialogue and poetry.

Acrimony, Acronym, and Rendering Other-Wise

Somewhere between cows, wows, and EMAR handy-candy
"Skype my doctor"
And "idiocracy medical scanners"
Generational angst meets tech-savvy realism
Who learns from SCM modules anyway?
Translating "the way things are done around here":
From indecipherable scribbles,
To the pre-formed scripts
Of acronyms and templates
Check that box
And a patient is a patient…is a patient.

Turf Wars of intimidation and non-action
Shoot down confidence.
I'm trying to keep up and not get over-burdened, over-whelmed…over it all.
Passive-aggressive eye roller
You know who you are
But it does not give you the right to throw it my way.
I'm not a stuck-up student
Or visitor in this place.
Where a student is a student…is a student.

I feel robbed as I work for you,
Instead of with you.
But having to "nurse up."
Cycled and recycled
Cloning and drowning
Where a nurse is a nurse…is a nurse.
I'm eager to practice what I've learned
Sometimes blowing over my patient
Sometimes stepping on toes
Getting wrapped up in the list of "to dos"
Wanting to get to know the people behind the positions we play
Asking endless questions
Holding precious fleeting moments
Of confidence, fear, confusion, difficulty
And tensions that are full of different perspectives
Where I am also contributing more than you know…

I'm an advocate, a facilitator, a mentor, a colleague, a team player, a leader who
Has potential and is open to working in complex organizations full of possibility and
ambiguity…
More than just a student,
More than just any nurse.

Reflection: The Great Quantum Leap

Olen Gunnlaugson (2011) notes that "academic learning across disciplines has
concentrated on intellectual development, establishing a prevailing pattern of education that
strengthens the individual learner's critical analyses and deliberative abilities to the neglect

of other essential ways of knowing and being" (p. 4). We posit that students transitioning to being RNs not only need but are entitled to spaces which affirm them for who they are as human beings and students, and for who they are becoming––practitioners with knowledge and skills and much to give. We also contend that classrooms imbued with love, play, and laughter, which we each have fully committed to within the constraints of curriculum, are indeed possible. We believe the constraints of curriculum can be mediated through provocation with an infusion of the creative arts. This begins with instructional design.

Instructional design is no easy feat. One must consider the needs of the educational institution, the instructors, and the students. We posit that provoking curriculum with creative arts-based teaching and learning strategies makes learning not only more relevant to students and teachers but to the educational institution itself. "Despite living in a historical period of increased distractions, interruptions, and complexity…the possibility always exists for cultivating…presence" (Gunnlaugson, 2011, p. 6). It is this presence that makes educators real and authentic, and that provides opportunity to be life-giving educators. Provoking the traditional becomes part of this process.

Provoking the traditional is not for the faint of heart. It takes courage to bring new strategies and activities into course designs as well as into the classroom for in the great halls of learning, tradition—like fine tea—is well steeped. In the end, creating new formats of instructional design and course delivery takes a (quantum) leap of faith.

In quantum physics a *quantum leap* is described much the same. The term *quantum leap* refers to the abrupt movement from one discrete energy level to another, with no smooth transition. There is no *inbetween* (University of Oregon, n.d., para. 3). It is all or nothing. Armed with courage and curiosity we sallied forth, head-on to design the course using creative arts-based learning strategies and to carry it forward into the classroom. It is within the liminal spaces in which our reflections were able to make sense of this experience.

To some, a nursing leadership workshop lasting five to eight hours on a single day of the week may be a challenging space to *excite* students. In quantum physics, a quantum leap occurs when "incident photons excite electrons to move up energy levels" (Nerek, 2014, para. 1). Learning and teaching, teaching and learning, becomes a never-ending spiral in a classroom for both instructor and student. Does one exist without the other? We believe not. So, how *does* an instructor maintain energy levels over the days and weeks of a summer course where warm weather and competing priorities abound? We believe the use of creative arts-based learning strategies contributed to energy levels that sustained and exceeded expectations. The instructor and the creative arts-based strategies (incident photon) have the power to excite students (electrons), effectively creating learning environments (knocking them off the atom or the status quo) (Nerek, 2014). In this process, learning for us became a collaborative and exciting adventure.

Reflection: Transition and Transformation

Times of transition trigger anxiety, or *transition shock* (Duchscher, 2009, p. 1103), but also provide opportunities to explore, quest, and ask important questions. Exploring the transition experience is considered an important element of successful transformation for those entering the profession. Exploring this professional role of transition firstly required our acknowledgement of transition shock in the classroom and in our teaching collaboration. Through the course design, we were able to engage with our own and our students' fears about transition. Enlisting the collection of arts-based strategies provided tools to reflect and to develop something new—a process of transformation—for all involved. A collection of

learning activities, put together in a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (the German term for a gestalt or total work of art), was able to cumulate and build a picture or story of transition that could make the process and possibility of *transformation* visible to students. According to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1988) "if we look at all these [terms of gestalt], especially the organic ones, we will discover that nothing in them is permanent, nothing is at rest or defined—everything is in a flux of continual motion" (p. 63).

Just as in a whole work of art, where the gestalt is bigger than the sum of its parts and constantly morphing, the experience of becoming an RN was more than the transition students were facing. The possibility of personal transformation was as important to students as professional transformations or broader social transformations. This possibility of a holistic exploration of nursing leadership was especially important to students who were particularly shocked by their experiences as becoming-nurses. The learning activities we explored in our courses and our lessons learned about provoking curriculum, were indeed mechanisms for provoking transformation.

Provoking the Curriculum: Examples of Arts-Based Class Activities

QL connects with the core course concepts of authenticity, self-expression, critical thought, and reflective practice by embracing potentiality, possibility, and all that possibility entails. Through possibility students were invited to engage in a series of creative and arts-based class activities. Through possibility the educator *calls* to students not only in an intellectual manner but through their hearts and souls as they as students learn to speak their truths. Our learning activities gave the students a voice, which became a vehicle in which students were "engaged…with language, [which nurtured their] inner life, [acknowledged] the particular and local, [encouraged students] to listen to [their] hearts, [fostered] flexibility and trust [and ultimately, interactively, and creatively, promoted life and] living" (Leggo, 2005, p. 454).

Photovoice and Letter Writing

Photovoice, as a teaching technology, was originally derived from Caroline Wang and Mary Burris' (1997) action research by Perry (2006). Photovoice, historically, involves use of an image (photographic or otherwise) alongside a reflective question which students respond to in narrative form.

In a photovoice exercise in our course, "Nurses Eat Their Young," a dominant narrative sparking transition anxiety in students, was explored. Students reflected on a theoretical transition cycle as well as an image of a mature nurse holding a junior nurse in the palm of her hand, and engaged in a free-writing exercise. The letter-writing exercise asked students to compose a two-part narrative: advice *from* their future self as a nurse leader, and advice *to* their future self as a nurse leader. Results of this activity were generative and powerful. Gunnlaugson (2011) expresses that "learning from the emerging future by…sensing into and intuiting not-yet-embodied or known possibilities" (p. 10) becomes a process of "facilitating…presence [which] can help uncover a liminal space of underlying wholeness that enables us to hear more about what our students are saying that might not be immediately obvious" (p. 7).

Benefits of letter writing are affirmation, acknowledgement, wisdom, reflection on resources, and the realization of witnessed strength and knowledge (Knoetze, 2013, p. 467). Anita Green and Nicki Lambert (2013) add to this that letter writing gives "users a permanent record that values their strengths [and] is a powerful and important part of

building resilience and supporting users to re-author their story" (p. 31). Jan Knoetze also emphasizes that that letter writing empowers students through affirmation of *alternative identities* (p. 459).

As we read the letters that students had written, we shared the joys and trials of becoming (the nurses they would be) and being (the students they currently were). The raw honesty exemplified within each letter became a privilege to witness. We learned of their hopes and their fears—what was of the upmost importance to these becoming-RNs. Most of all we learned how they were confronting the transition to becoming-RNs with courage and optimism, which built our own sense of hope for the future.

The trust that was given to us as educators was humbling. It was evident in many of the letters that students were not only sharing the transitions and connections in their work of becoming-RNs, but that they were sharing some of their deepest hopes and fears. In this way the students "cultivated presence" (Gunnlaugson, 2011, p. 6) and a connection to the very heart of the matters of transition to the profession. Times of transition try the heart and soul as none other times may. This trying of the heart and soul as students move through the transition of becoming-RNs, encompasses both joy and suffering. Nancy Moules (2002) has noted that "recognition of suffering is about willing to meet them at the point of their pain, not to whitewash it, or colour it differently, but to step into the blackness and the grey" (p. 106). So it is with educators. To acknowledge both suffering and anticipation becomes a task with which we are entrusted.

We lent encouragement that they could one day look back on this time of transition and realize that they had accomplished all they had wanted to become. We honoured students and their dreams through our feedback. This feedback came at a time in the semester that many students reported to have *needed it most*. This shared trust is represented in the following poem written by Katherine Janzen:

Transition

I see myself
As I am.
Scared, insecure;
Not knowing
If what I want most to come to pass
Will transpire.

The spaces between the two—
Now and then,
Seems insurmountable
From where I sit right now.
A student nurse
Full of hopes and fears.

I write to you.
You, who have the power of insight
And the blessing of hindsight
To offer me encouragement.

I take heart and courage
That the nurse
That I will be in the future
Sees me now.
That nurse of wisdom,
Who offers the vision of who I will be.
All that I am.
All that I can become,
All that I was meant to be
And, oh, so much more.

Collective Quilting

Another of the creative arts-based strategies that stood out for us was Collective Quilting (Janzen, 2013), which is a variation of Perry, Edwards, and Janzen's (2014) Conceptual Quilting. The art of quilting has been around for centuries. Emily Burt and Jacqueline Atkinson's (2012) research revealed that the benefits of quilting included emotional and social processes, wellbeing, a productive use of time, challenge, increased concentration, the maintenance of new skills, the experience of *flow* and creativity. A strong social network and the affirmation from other quilters was part of the increased self-esteem and motivation for those quilting. These benefits were the basis of developing the learning activity "Collective Quilting."

Collective Quilting involved the instructors preparing various colours and designs of quilt squares for students, with a piece of lined paper stapled to them for students to write upon. The preparation was done prior to class. This strategy was primarily evaluative in nature for us and was the capstone activity for our classes.

Our goal was to find out what core concept(s) stood out for each of the students over the course of the semester. Each student chose their own quilt square. Students wrote on the quilt square what they were going to take away most from the course. Students later gathered as a group at the front of the classroom to construct the collective quilt. Each student spoke to their square and laid it down on the floor. As subsequent quilt squares were laid on the floor, a collective quilt with patterns and themes emerged.

The Collective Quilt activity represented a constructive use of time as students and instructors alike learned from each other. Sharing quilt squares (students' and instructors') fostered affirmation between those in the class. As a capstone activity for the course, the Collective Quilt provided a vehicle for summary and closure for students. Students were eager for their *quilt* to be shared with their peers and others, and signed consents for use of their collective quilt in the future. The insights provided from this activity have informed future revisions of the course. Concepts related to transition were illuminated in the quilt, and instructors were able to highlight what could be taken forward in the students' journeys from nursing student to graduate nurse.

Katherine Janzen (2015). *Collective Quilt: A Summative Activity.* Digital photograph.

One can easily envision a group of employees leisurely standing by the water cooler, each waiting to fill their brightly coloured containers with water; the conversation filled and brimming with the morning's newscast and current events. The water cooler is a space for sharing, exploring, learning, and expressing. Opinions are offered as well as critical thoughts directed towards the essences of life and living in our frenetic world of complexity and the issues and stories that surround us. At times these stories may be fleeting; at times these issues are the painful realities of being human in a world torn and ravaged by disease, war, terrorism, and natural disasters. Technology has indeed made our worlds smaller as the Internet and social media spread *stories* almost instantaneously.

Fulford (1999) perhaps said it best: "[T]here is no such thing as just a story. A story is always charged with meaning; otherwise it is not a story, just a sequence of events" (p. 6). We posit that the same premises apply to issues in nursing leadership. Issues in nursing leadership are certainly charged with meaning both individually and collectively. Knoetze (2013) points out that stories (and we add issues) must out of necessity have both hearers and tellers, and times of transition provide a rich milieu for storytelling. Given the proper conditions,

> telling…stories is an attempt at meaning making. Each story told articulates, in encoded or explicit ways, the teller-listeners' respective involvement with the dilemmas of their world; it provides a vessel for containing their concerns. Through our words, we both communicate information and create new meanings.

(p. 462)

We introduced *water cooler talks* for students not only to engage in *storytelling* regarding current issues in leadership in the news but also, as Karen Mackinnon and Lynne Young (2014) relate, to encourage critical thinking and dialogue. Each student came prepared for their water cooler talks by choosing a news clip regarding a current issue in nursing leadership that they had previously chosen, preparing answers from a template of questions. They then discussed it with a group of four of their peers. Each student had five minutes for discussion. They were then given constructive feedback from their peers on their presentation.

Elevator Speeches

Imagine having five minutes to pitch an idea or issue that was a source of passion to those in an elevator, but only having the time that an elevator took to get from the bottom to the top of a large building. This was the scenario given to the students. The "elevator speeches" as they were dubbed, were either in audio or video format and uploaded online. All students listened or watched individual elevator speeches and then voted (out of five stars) which ones were the best. This format required being concise, to think critically, and to defend one's position succinctly. The elevator speeches proved to be both entertaining and educative. The students were very creative, often eliciting other *actors* in their speeches when in video format, as well as adding music.

"Elevator Speech Awards" (akin to Academy Awards) were presented to students for areas such as: most passionate speech, most convincing speech, most creative speech, best music, and overall the best elevator speeches in audio and video format. This introduced an element of fun and play into the classroom as students were required to give a short acceptance speech and received a small award and a certificate of recognition. One class gave recipients bowling pins which were spray-painted silver, while another class' recipients received plastic, fluted champagne glasses filled with pieces of wrapped milk chocolate as awards. One student acted as the Master of Ceremonies and the students offered their applause and cheers at the end of each acceptance speech. Students in one class had their peers take pictures of them accepting their awards from their instructor. This activity engaged students and was equally enjoyable and engaging for instructors. This further mediated learning using the creative arts. Benefits, as described by Cheryl Kerr and Cathryn Lloyd (2008), included: "authentic ways of [being]…captivation, pleasure, expanded capacity for empathy, cognitive growth, creation of social bonds…[and] the development of self…" (p. 490–491).

Media Collages

Creating collages has been a part of our education, likely since elementary school where imagination and critical thinking were stimulated in an arts-based curriculum. Just as history can be brought to life in through making collages that traditional lecture or textbook education/learning cannot (Seo, Templeton, & Pelligrino, 2008), issues can be brought to life through the construction of collages. Collages are useful to assist students in determining and exploring values, perceptions, and emotions and to deepen "reflective analysis and self-exploration" (Shepard & Guenette, 2010, p. 296). Further, collage can be "a freeing and playful experience, as there are no rules"; collage "offers the opportunity to engage in an extremely rich, visual, kinesthetic experience as participants move shapes, colours, words, and images on [paper] before gluing them into place" (p. 298). We believe that collages tell a story just as fully as a written narrative can. Collages delve into the

unspoken—that for which there are no words to speak—and yet speak at times louder than words.

We found that the "creative collage" or media collage, based upon a leadership issue, was an ideal way to further exploration of the issue on a personal, societal, and social level. Groups of four students were provided with nursing magazines, glue sticks, scissors, and paper to create their own collages related to their chosen issue with a focus on social activism. Alternately, students created collages on their computers using royalty-free images and text. The students freely chose either medium, but the vast majority of students chose paper-based collages. Students put their desks together facing each other and worked on their collages for an hour and a half, dialoging with their peers in the creation process. It was apparent that they were serious about this activity and again were engaged as they chose and moved images and text about the blank pages in preparation for the final gluing process. What were produced were stunning images and provocative text regarding their chosen issue, experienced by the observer in a way that merely writing a paper could have not represented. These collages were full of emotive images and evocative text that lent emotion, passion, and vision to the students' selected issue as expressed in the following poem, written by Katherine Janzen:

Collage

Evocative, provocative, emotive.
These are the images that jump from the page.
Words accompany with no less effect
As we narrate our issues through picture and word
With kinesthetic ease.
We believe that we can change the world
Through social activism
One voice at a time.

Joining in unison
We become a great force
For we are the future
Of healthcare;
The future of generations
Past, present and those to come.
Our future becomes
Entwined with theirs
Where destiny meets destiny
To make a difference.

Discussion and Conclusions

Fourth-year nursing students are in an important liminal space of transition between the experiences that have shaped their foundational learning as undergraduates and imagining their future careers as becoming-RNs. A capstone course in nursing leadership provided opportunities to expand student nurses' critical analysis of organization discourses from local to global dimensions of the healthcare system; it also required reflection-in-action (Schön, 1993) as students moved between clinical practice and classroom discussions with their lived experience of that complexity. Provoking the tensions embedded in this space required a leap of faith from professors and students alike.

We have attempted to engage principles from QL to connect with our core course objectives by attending to the following concepts: authenticity, self-expression, critical thought, and reflective practice. Creative arts-based strategies that we used to provocatively bridge that learning included variations of photo voice, collective quilting, water cooler talks, elevator speeches, media collage, academic response journals, and student-led discussion boards. Through exploration of select examples and reflections we are able to invoke a more fulsome view of what it is like in the nursing students' transition towards leadership as becoming-RNs. Some preliminary conjecture from our observations and reflections thus far is that these arts-based activities can encourage both individual and collective storytelling and consciousness.

We have uncovered that transition (the focus of the course being transition to more independent practice and nursing leadership) is also well aligned to the QL approach (Janzen, 2013). A holistic response to the pressing concerns identified by students (for example, fear and isolation) in their transitions to nursing leadership practice was facilitated in the arts-based activities. Through the use of creative arts-based activities, students began to see themselves, not as hopeless prisoners destined to helplessly succumb to the transition shock described by Judy Duchscher (2009), but as prepared to creatively make that transition to becoming-RNs. For us, as educators, the use of creative arts-based activities represented a quantum leap which has and will continue to inspire and energize us for years to come in our efforts to provoke curriculum design and delivery.

The creative arts provide a medium through which transition can be explored by students and instructors alike in a rich and deep manner. This exploration often results in deep reflection as we traverse the landscapes of transition together. What ensues is hope, within a traditional milieu of feelings of isolation and fear for students as they move into and through the liminal spaces of fourth-year nursing student to becoming-RN. It is anticipated that through further exploration of utilizing creative arts-based strategies, this transition for students will become a kinder and gentler process.

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