

PROPOSAL FOR WRAB III, Paris France, 19-22 February 2014

Submitted: 1 APRIL 2013

Session Type: 3-member, international symposia

Area of Research: Teaching Writing & Rhetoric (Writing in the Disciplines)

Symposia Chair (Canada): doctoral candidate, study of teaching and learning (SoTL) in the professional disciplines

Speaker 1 (Canada): *The use of reflective writing in exploring medical students' experiences in surgery*

Speaker 2 (United States): *Systematic review on educational programs, strategies, and assignments in nursing education to develop students' writing skills*

Speaker 3 (United States): *Creative writing in seminary: A spiritual, organic, and reciprocal process in the formation and reflection of Christian character*

Key words: writing in the disciplines, medical education, nursing education, clergy education

Word count: 985

Preparing for professional practice: Writing pedagogies and affective complexities of student writing in medicine, nursing, and clergy education

PURPOSE & SCOPE OF SYMPOSIA

The speakers of this symposia come together from the USA, Canada, and New Zealand to discuss the contextual writing pedagogies that cultivate distinct forms of student writing in the professional disciplines of medicine, nursing, and clergy education. The purpose is to foster greater rhetorical and pedagogical understanding of discipline-specific writing genres and teaching methods that help prepare students for professional practice. Our primary question is: How do students, who are preparing for professional practice, develop professional identity through assigned writing genres?

LITERATURE/BACKGROUND & RESEARCH

Writing pedagogy has drawn from many schools of thought and academic communities, such as anthropology (Lave & Wenger, 1991), education (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987); discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), genre theory (Miller, 1984; Swales, 1990), sociolinguistics (Bakhtin, 1986), and rhetoric and composition (Flower, 1994). Recent perspectives from the scholarship of teaching and learning (Shulman, 2005) have focused on the concept of identity formation and were adopted in the professional disciplines (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006; Cooke, Irby, & O'Brien, 2010; Benner, Sutphen, Leonard & Day, 2009; Foster, Dahill, Golemon, & Tolentino, 2005).

The symposia presented here will focus on identity formation through assigned writing genres. Writing traditions of the represented disciplines share, for the most part, a set of intentions that emphasize sociocognitive habits integral to professional practice. In the 21st century, however, discipline-specific writing pedagogy is more problematic in that these disciplines use particular writing genres to cultivate a professional identity and assimilate students to traditions of practice and performance, as a way of thinking (*think like a surgeon, think like a nurse, think like a pastor*).

Each of our three speakers will address the following topics and methodologies:

Speaker 1 reports on a 5-year study of using reflective writing to explore student experiences in

surgery at one large Canadian university. The purpose was to understand how reflective writing, an uncommon genre in his MD curriculum, might help pre-clerkship students and surgery educators develop self-assessment skills for residency training and independent practice.

Methodology: Theories of narrative medicine (Charon, 2006) and situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) informed the study. After university ethics approval, 3rd and 4th year students completing their surgery rotation were informed of the study, and asked to complete a one-page assignment, to reflect on any aspect of their surgery experience, and write on anything of their choice. Data collection included 1,338 reflective assignments and 65 different genres. Narrative analysis (Mayan, 2010) and OmniGraffle® software tools were used to sort and code assignments. As major categorical themes emerged, parent-sibling codes were established to reflect these themes. **Results:** It was anticipated that students would recall interesting encounters with patients and other surgeons, or perhaps reveal poor teaching practices. Instead, we discovered a constellation of personal, political, relational, emotional, ideological, social, professional, institutional, and epistemological dynamics that were previously unknown to us. We grouped them into three categories: 1) expectations and assumptions; 2) social nature of learning; 3) relationships and emotions. **Discussion:** will include genre samples (essays, songs, videos, art), themes students wrote most/least about, the sociology of power in medicine, and its implications for pre-clerkship curricular development.

Speaker 2 has spent more than 30 years researching the writing experiences of undergraduate nursing students in the United States. Written communication skills are critical for nursing practice, and a goal of nursing programs at all levels is to prepare students to communicate clearly and effectively in writing. At the prelicensure level, students learn to communicate patient information and to write about nursing as a profession. At the master's and doctoral levels, the goal is to develop scholarly writing skills to disseminate the findings of research studies and evidence-based practice projects, describe innovations in clinical practice, and function as leaders in the health system. Although nurse educators recognize the importance of students developing their writing skills, few prelicensure nursing programs integrate the teaching of writing across the curriculum, and the majority of student writing assignments involve short papers, concept maps, journals, and writing-to-learn activities rather than formal papers with drafts and feedback on writing (Oermann, 2013; Troxler, Vann & Oermann, 2011). Not only does this type of writing limit the development of scholarly writing skills among nursing students, few promote clinical reasoning, the integration of class and clinical learning, and thinking like a nurse (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2010). New approaches are needed that integrate writing instruction across the curriculum that promote development of students' scholarly writing, clinical reasoning, integration of theory and practice, and learning to think like a nurse. These new approaches, however, need to take into consideration that most nurse educators are not prepared to teach writing; many are responsible for teaching large numbers of students in their classes, offered increasingly online; and with the significant shortage of nurse educators, many courses are taught by nurses with limited preparation in educational theory and pedagogy. This presentation will report on the findings of a systematic review of how writing is currently taught in prelicensure and graduate nursing programs and will propose new approaches to teaching writing in nursing education that reflect these current needs.

Speaker 3 will briefly discuss the theory-practice divide of using creative writing in the formation of Christian character and fulfilling one US seminary's mission of preparing students

for professional ministry. The idea of reflecting Christ to the world is theologically mimetic, and so moves formation beyond representation to ontological resemblance. Recent research in neuroscience (Ramachandran, 2011; Zull, 2002) suggests a correlation between the function of mirror neurons (being), the spiritual discipline of reflecting Christ to the world (becoming), and creative writing (doing). Currently, theologians lack an effective correlative methodology that would help 21st-century seminarians build a vital rhetorical framework for articulating Christlike character in professional ministry. Drawing from neuroscience and aesthetic theology, and from over three decades of teaching creative writing at the graduate/doctoral level, Speaker 3 has developed a working model that nurtures the spiritual, organic, and reciprocal process of identity formation in seminary. Four key elements of the model include: 1) nonlinear perception; 2) pattern recognition; 3) relational interpretation; and 4) rhetorical communication. Finally, he will share case studies of particular students' representative work that exemplifies the model, and reveal how his methodology of creative writing helps stabilize the students' identity, and facilitate reflection of Christian character.

IMPLICATIONS

Our respective research suggests that assigned genres require complex performances intended to develop habits of mind. We have found that reflective writing in medicine, scholarly writing in nursing, and creative writing in seminary are responsive communicative circumstances that mobilize dynamic processes associated with complex emotional, social, moral, and affective functions, from which, the students communicate and develop their intellectual and professional identity.

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