

PROPOSAL FOR CCCC 2014, Indianapolis

Submitted: 6 MAY 2013

Session Type: Individual

Level Emphasis: 4-year

Area Cluster: 1) Academic writing; **Major Focus:** WAC/WID

One sentence description: This presentation will focus on identity formation through reflective writing and report on a 5-year study of using reflective writing to explore student experiences in surgery at one large Canadian university.

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Preparing for professional practice: Reflective writing pedagogy and medical students' experiences in a surgery rotation

Purpose & Focus: The purpose of this presentation is to foster greater rhetorical and pedagogical understanding of discipline-specific writing genres and teaching methods that help prepare students for professional practice. This presentation will focus on identity formation through reflective writing and report on a 5-year study of using reflective writing to explore student experiences in surgery at one large Canadian university. The aim of the study was to understand how reflective writing, which is an uncommon genre in our MD curriculum, might help pre-clerkship students and surgery educators develop self-assessment skills for residency training and independent practice.

Background: 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; Sullivan, Colby, Wegner, Bond, & Shulman, 2007).

Several authors have demonstrated that medical students can use personal creative writing to reflect upon their educational experiences (Plack et al., 2007; Poirer, Ahrens, & Brauner, 1998; Shapiro, Kasman, & Shafer, 2006). However, no studies to our knowledge have explored the student experience in Surgery or explored how reflective writing is used to determine what events and issues medical students consider important to their professional development during their clerkship.

Methods: 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: The sample 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 emotional dynamics.

Discussion: will include genre samples (essays, songs, videos, art), themes students wrote most/least about, the sociology of power in medicine, and implications for pre-clerkship curricular development. Our research suggests that reflective writing is a responsive communicative circumstance that mobilizes dynamic processes associated with complex emotional, social, moral, and affective functions, from which, medical students assess and develop their intellectual and professional identity.

References

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