

Affect and Reflection: Toward a greater understanding of student perceptions toward
reflective journaling

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The value placed upon reflection in thinking and learning is accepted as being an important part of higher education (Brockbank & McGill, 1998), professional training (Strauss et al., 2003) and professional practice (Schön, 1983). The contemporary definition of reflective thinking refers to “assessing the grounds of one’s beliefs” (Dewey, 1933, p. 9). Or put another way, assessing the justifications of the assumptions through which one comes to believe a particular piece of information – how one justifies their beliefs. This process of learning is comprised of the “intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation” (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985, p. 3). This most often takes the form of recording an experience and then revisiting it to better understand the underlying beliefs which lead the individual to see the experience in a particular way.

As Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) indicate, the process of reflection has two distinct parts: intellectual (cognitive) and affective (emotional). The affective component is especially important, for during the reflective process an individual’s feelings and perceptions serve to influence the experience – *affective reflectivity* (Mezirow, 1990) and provide either a source of difficulty for engaging in reflection or serve to simplify the experience (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). In order to better implement reflective exercises as part of student learning, it is therefore important to better understand these affective components of the reflective process and their relationship to existing learning experiences.

Reflective Journaling and Weblogs

There are several methods for promoting reflection amongst students in higher education and professional training. However, journal writing has come to be one of the primary exercises students undertake in many curricula, for it enables students the chance to externalize their experiences in a written reflective format (Stickel & Trimmer, 1994) and then analyze these experiences in reference to the current discussions (Andrusyszyn & Davie, 1997). This process of writing can enable the student in “making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). In the realm of professional health care education, in particular that of nursing, journaling has been seen as a tool to encourage the development of higher order analytical and critical thinking skills (Jasper, 1999).

Personal Web-publishing applications, in particular the Weblog (blog), have emerged in recent years as a platform upon which reflective journaling can take place (Stiler & Philleo, 2003; Wagner, 2003; Williams & Jacobs, 2004). The traditional Weblog takes the form of a reverse chronological web-page, where individual postings written by the user are time stamped and archived, and can be commented upon by readers. By themselves, Weblogs do not promote reflection. Rather, it is through the ability to archive, search and review comments to postings, which enables students to review their experiences from a distance and therefore engage in reflective thinking (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). This notion of distance, of being able to refer to experiences through another medium, writing (in this case online), is another aspect of reflection (Bateson, 1972; Sorensen, 2004). Bateson’s learning theory surmises that where there is no distance (a direct relationship) between the student and that which is to

be learned, reflection does not take place as the student is unaware that they are learning in the moment. When distance does exist (an indirect relationship), the student reflects upon the experience and is aware that they are learning. Sorensen (2004) argues that virtual environments are therefore well suited to promote reflection as they *lengthen* the distance between students and that which is to be learned (2004). Weblogs, by their very design and usage, create this distance and should be ideal for reflective journaling.

However, there is very little scholarship examining student's feelings and perceptions toward reflective journaling in Weblogs. A better understanding of these affective characteristics could serve to provide greater guidance for future implementations of Weblog based reflective journaling. An opportunity arose during the formulation of a project to extend a course-specific pen and paper based reflective journaling exercise onto an online Weblog, whereby students, whom were aware of the potential usage of Weblogs, were asked to share their experiences regarding the pen and paper based exercises up to that point. The question for exploration was: what do students engaged in course-specific reflective journaling perceive as the utility of the journaling exercise?

Research Design

Procedure

A phenomenological research method was chosen in order to explore this question, as phenomenology is primarily concerned with understanding the participants' experiences with a particular moment (Spinelli, 1989). In this case, that moment was a reflective journaling exercise in a first year *Doctor, Patient and Society* (DPAS) course at a major Canadian Medical/Dental school. The purpose of the DPAS course in the

curriculum is to allow students a chance to explore the *varying contexts* in which the diseases they are being trained to diagnose and treat are found, namely, the lived world of their patients, and more importantly, how they as students (and eventual health professionals) perceive that world (i.e. economically marginalized – poor, cultural beliefs, etc.) in their current belief system. The format of the DPAS course is therefore organized around one three hour lecture – tutorial group session which occurs once a week throughout the first two years of the medical/dental curriculum at the aforementioned school. As a new educational initiative, the 2005-2006 academic year served as an opportunity to incorporate a reflective journaling exercise directly into the DPAS course: students would pre-read a selected reading(s), attend an one hour lecture on the topic, move into their tutorial groups, journal for fifteen minutes (*primary journaling*), commence in a 60-90 minute discussion with their peers and the tutorial leader regarding the topics of the reading(s) and lecture, and then journal for fifteen minutes at the conclusion of the afternoon (*secondary journaling*). It was hoped that the journaling exercise would serve as a catalyst to *perspective transformation* which would occur “in response to an externally imposed disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 13), namely, student’s would be placed in a situation where they would have to explore their own presuppositions toward the topic under discussion and perhaps interrogate their existing beliefs in greater depth. In this study, the first semester of the first year of the journaling exercise was to be explored as part of a larger evaluation of the DPAS course.

Participants

Participants in this study consisted of six first year dental students enrolled in the integrated Medicine-Dental curriculum at the aforementioned school. Four of the

participants were male, and two were female. The participants were sent a joint e-mail by the researcher and the course director for DPAS with an invitation to attend a focus group to share their thoughts regarding the first semester of the course. All participants had engaged in course-specific reflective journaling (once a week) over the course of the first semester of their training. In addition, all participants agreed to share their thoughts candidly within the focus group and granted the researcher the opportunity to digitally audio record their comments.

Data Collection

The focus group interview, which consisted of approximately 60 minutes with all six participants and the interviewer, was situated within a larger evaluation of the current course as mandated by the course director. The purpose of the evaluation was to gain greater insight into the current state of the course by collecting feedback from student participants, while allowing a forum to explore the research question. A semi-formal interview question protocol consisting of a series of open-ended questions was developed based upon the interview guidelines outlined by Patton (2002). These guidelines provided six question types: 1) Experience and Behaviour, 2) Opinion and Values, 3) Feeling, 4) Knowledge, 5) Sensory and 6) Background/Demographic (see Appendix 1 for the list of questions and their corresponding type). The majority of the questions pertained to the evaluation of the course as mandated by the course director; however, several questions addressed the journaling exercise and were used as the primary source of data to explore the research question. Shortly before the focus group interview, the decision was made (through discussions between the course director and researcher) that the discussion enabled by the questions should be as free-flowing as possible, so 1) not

all questions were asked of the participants, and 2) the order of questions was changed to suit nature of the discussion during the interview. The interview questions pertaining directly to this study focused on the following two main themes: the purpose participants attributed to the reflective journaling exercise, and participants comfort levels in sharing their writings.

Data Analysis

The focus group interview was transcribed and a paper based analysis undertaken. The primary focus of the initial analysis was to identify the question types pertaining to the course evaluation or the journaling exercise in particular. However, this initial categorization proved problematic due to the variance in participant responses, namely, quite a few responses addressed both the overall course while making explicit reference to the journaling exercise. It was therefore decided to abandon this initial categorization and rather move to an open – thematic, axial coding scheme which emerged from the insights and interpretations during the interview itself, essentially, what the interviewer felt were the main topics addressed by the participants during the interview. The identified main thematic codes were: 1) time – as it pertained to the different activities encompassed in a DPAS afternoon; 2) variance – as it pertained to the topics and organization of the tutorial discussions and journaling exercises; and 3) representation of the student' s ideas – as it pertained to the journaling exercise and the discussion topics. The axial coding scheme, where attempts were made to create sub-categories proved to be difficult until a pattern emerged in the participant responses themselves, namely, the dichotomous nature of responses to most questions: the participants' self-reported identification of being either a dominant or a quiet student (a more thorough definition

will be provided in the next section) in small group tutorial verbal discussions. The responses by both types of participants, dominant or quiet, provided a clear contrast which allowed for a more thorough analysis of the research question.

Themes and Findings

As the focus group interview was situated within a larger evaluation of the current DPAS course, much of the interview transcript, especially the initial questions and discussion, were initially deemed superfluous by the researcher to the themes to be explored in relation to this study. However, these initial questions, framed as Experience and Behaviour question types (Patton, 2002), proved to be an invaluable source for establishing the context for further analysis and exploration of the research question, and only became evident during an immersion in the text. This section is therefore divided into the following sub-sections: *context and definitions for exploration* which emerged out of the larger evaluation of the course and served to provide the framework for addressing the research question, *perception toward journaling and sharing* which provides an analysis of the participants' responses toward the research question, and *potential designs* which describes some of the ways in which participants felt the current journaling exercise should be carried forward.

Context and Definitions for Exploration

The interviewer, not being intimately versed in the current content and format of the DPAS course, asked the participants to describe a typical DPAS afternoon and the preparation and experiences a student would encounter. It was felt that this overview as provided by the participants, might serve to ground the remainder of the participants' responses and ideas and allow for a more thorough examination of the research question.

While the responses to this question did vary, a general consensus formed around the following:

...we have assigned readings that we are supposed to have come prepared and have read, and the lecture will then discuss in part those readings but others as well...get together in our small groups, and...do a journal entry, to start, which just is reflecting on the lecture, or on a question that our tutor may have posed to us or on the readings we may have done. Then we'll either discuss it...we could discuss a particular part, we could discuss the general idea, or sometimes our Tutor would give us a challenge or a question we consider ourselves for discussion...at the end, we would reflect on everything, once again, in a second entry. (Interview Participant #1)

During many of the responses to and discussion enabled by this general question of the format of the course, participants made reference to the discussion in the small group tutorial. This led into a question posed by the interviewer as to how the journal entries tied to the discussions in the tutorials, as they had identified a relationship of *primary journaling – discussion – secondary journaling* (*primary journaling* took place immediately after the lecture for fifteen minutes, this was followed up by a *discussion* in a small tutorial group for 60-90 minutes, and the afternoon concluded with *secondary journaling* for fifteen minutes). Interestingly, there were two distinct response types that this question brought to the forefront, and which served to provide the categorization that carried on throughout the rest of the analysis. Namely, participants situated and self-identified themselves in one of two roles in the discussion portion of the relationship: 1) as being a *dominant* personality “that talk[s] quite a bit within the sessions and throws out

all of my ideas that I put down ... in my journal to the discussion” (Interview Participant #4); or 2) as being a *quiet* personality “that likes to write more than talk and organize their thoughts before discussion” (Interview Participant #2).

The following categorization scheme was thereby developed, after reviewing all participant comments in the transcript for its integrity:

Interview Participant #1_{dominant (self-identified)}

Interview Participant #2_{quiet (self-identified)}

Interview Participant #3_{unclassified}

Interview Participant #4_{dominant (self-identified)}

Interview Participant #5_{quiet (self-identified)}

Interview Participant #6_{unclassified}

It is important to note that Interview Participants #2 and #5_{quiet (self-identified)} were the female members of the focus group. However, on several occasions their responses coincided with those of Interview Participants #3 and #6_{unclassified}, both male, so an analysis based upon gender was not undertaken. The choice of coding terminology – *quiet*, which could be interpreted as *passive*, was purposefully chosen to ensure the negative connotations of passive did not bias further analysis. The _{unclassified} participants proved an interesting point of analysis, for their responses during the interview seemed to shift between the two identified extremes, and were therefore lumped together with either the _{dominant} or _{quiet} roles for ease of analysis.

Perception toward Journaling and Sharing

Having established the two personality types of participants within the focus group, the differing views regarding the relationship of *primary journaling* – *discussion* –

secondary journaling took on even more significance. The _{dominant} participants viewed the primary journaling exercise as an opportunity *to prepare* for the verbal discussion, and then the secondary journaling exercise as an opportunity to summarize the ideas they had presented in the verbal discussion:

...at the end of the tutorial session, I feel like I'm always typically at a loss of what to write, and I always tend to summarize my thoughts for the tutorial. ...it is a summary for me, because I do also like talk a lot in my group...I say everything that's on my mind...that I'd like to talk about. (Interview Participant #1_{dominant})

However, the quiet participants viewed the primary journaling exercise as an opportunity to consolidate their knowledge up to that point, and then the secondary journaling exercise as an opportunity to explore how their thinking may have shifted through the discussion:

...writing in the journal in the beginning really let's you consolidate your thoughts after the lecture...what do I know at this point, what are my views...it let's you assess what do I know walking in. After discussion...at the final journal writing...you can write down what you've learned after that, and I think it can serve as a good comparison of the process...learning about the topics...and bringing meaning to yourself... (Interview Participant #2_{quiet})

The discussion pertaining to the sharing of the contents of journal entries proved to be equally insightful, for though the interviewer meant the *physical* sharing of the journals with others, both personality types applied their own definitions to the concept of sharing as it related to the *primary journaling – discussion – secondary journaling* relationship. The _{dominant} participants saw the journal's purpose as being to prepare for the

discussion: “I would say that everything I write in my journal comes out in the group [discussion]” (Interview Participant #4_{dominant}). However, the quiet participants, while maintaining their previous understanding of the *primary journaling – discussion – secondary journaling* relationship, added the concept of their *personal voice* and having it heard:

Not all my thoughts are...necessarily shared in the group...it depends on what direction the discussion takes...and because I’m quiet. I’m never going to be the one to lead a discussion, so a lot of my thoughts don’t come out in the group and its nice that my tutor will hear my voice... (Interview Participant #2_{quiet})

Potential Designs

Throughout the interview and again during the closing discussion, several themes emerged that can be best thought of as suggestions for the potential design of reflective journaling exercises in the DPAS course, all of which could be implemented in its current pen and paper based format or in a Weblog.

Time within class to complete the journaling and uniformity of the journaling exercise were mentioned at the beginning of the interview in the typical DPAS afternoon question as well as during an open-ended discussion at the end where participants were encouraged to discuss topics they felt needed to be raised. While there were comparisons across tutorial groups, some groups always journaling twice an afternoon (Interview Participant #1_{dominant}), some groups journaling only once (Interview Participant #3_{unclassified}), and some not at all (Interview Participant #6_{unclassified}), it was a reference to journaling at home that provided the most interesting insight into how contextually dependant the journaling was to some participants:

I don't really approve of doing reflective journaling at home, which is where our tutor is telling us to do it because we are running out of time [in the tutorial]. And I just think that it takes away from the thought process...when you are in DPAS, you're actually thinking in the mindset of DPAS, where as if you are doing it at home, you're say thinking about immunology and you are like ok I have 15 minutes now I can start thinking about this, you are not going to get a really good or complete thought process on paper. (Interview Participant #3_{unclassified})

Providing feedback to others regarding their journals was another important theme which emerged out of the discussion on sharing, but is presented separately as it seemed to provide another insight which fit better into this section. Concerned primarily with the topic of providing and receiving *negative* feedback, the participants termed this concept 'tact' and discussed it at length (see Appendix 2 for a complete excerpt and the next section for a more thorough discussion).

Discussion and Implications

Calling Distance into Question

The *primary journaling – discussion – secondary journaling* relationship would appear to be at the centre of how students perceive reflective journaling in the current DPAS course. Furthermore, the differing value _{dominant} and _{quiet} students place upon this relationship and where they situate their *personal voice*: _{dominant} students in the discussion and _{quiet} students in the journal writing would seem to call into question if a truly reflective learning experience is taking place for all students. Drawing once again on Bateson's learning theory (1972) the _{dominant} students appear to be connecting the primary journaling exercise *too directly* to the discussion. The result being the lack of distance

(no distance) Bateson posits as inhibiting the realization that they are learning through this process, and evidenced by the *dominant* students' difficulties in writing more than a summary of the discussion in their secondary journaling. It could therefore be argued that the *dominant* students are in fact **not** engaging in reflective thinking. However, the *quiet* students are successfully able to maintain this distance by utilizing the context of the discussion to *indirectly* connect their primary and secondary journaling, and allowing these students to realize they are in fact learning by comparing their two journal entries and therefore offering the opportunity to engage in reflective thinking on any changes.

The implications of this interpretation are profound, for they would seem to indicate that within the context of the DPAS course, *dominant* students may have more difficulty actually engaging in reflective thinking and thereby enabling a transformative change in their thinking (Mezirow, 1990). However, this difficulty would appear, at least outwardly, as an easy fix by posing the following explicit question to *dominant* students whom have difficulty providing more than a summary in their secondary journaling: Referring to your ideas in the primary journaling, describe how they did/did not change through the discussions you had with your peers during the tutorial?

Implications

When the initial interview question protocol was developed, the notion of sharing ideas with peers and the self-censoring that might take place before sharing was of particular concern to the researcher. The existing scholarship in regard to Weblogs (remembering again that it is very limited) would seem to support the notion that students would rise above their anxieties toward sharing (Williams & Jacobs, 2004). However, informal comments from students and *wisdom* from the instructors whom were currently

reading students' journals played a very strong role in the researcher's belief that students would in fact become less open if the move to Weblogs was made. As part of the questions pertaining to sharing, the interviewer asked if participants would self-censor their writings if they knew the entire group would have access to them. The response to this question was quite surprising to the researcher: "whatever I put in the journal, I felt comfortable sharing with anybody, when I don't feel comfortable, I probably don't put it in the journal" (Interview Participant #6_{unclassified}). The fact that students were *already* censoring their ideas before writing was something that had not been previously recognized by the researcher and therefore had remained an impediment to implementing Weblogs for reflective journaling.

Perhaps the most spontaneous of the ideas which emerged from the interview and its analysis was that regarding the discussion of providing constructive feedback ('tact') to fellow peers regarding their journal entries (see Appendix 2 for a complete excerpt). Here again, the _{dominant} and _{quiet} participants seemed to diverge in their confidence on being able to provide this type of feedback to their peers. The _{dominant} participants seemed skeptical that 1) the skills of providing constructive feedback could be taught or for that matter learned, and 2) building upon this former idea: "I feel like if you are willing to shot someone down in a un-tactful way, now, I think you will do it in the future as well" (Interview Participant #1_{dominant}). The _{quiet} participants however, were quite reflective on the care one would have to employ in order to provide constructive feedback to a peer: "whether or not you are able to give feedback that is negative but also helpful, and said in a way that respects the person's ideas" (Interview Participant #5_{quiet}). Again referring to the last section and questioning whether or not reflective thinking is taking place for all

students might be the best way to approach these two views regarding feedback. Here again, we find that the *quiet* students whom are engaging in reflective thinking *already* are able to explore the idea in much more depth than the *dominant* students whom up to this point, may not have been engaging in reflective thinking.

The implication of this interpretation is not as straight forward as posing an explicit question to *dominant* students, for the students need to possess the ability to reflect on the journal writings of their peers and then pose their *own* questions. In the interim, providing students with the generic formal structure for formulating and providing constructive feedback might be all that can be done, until these students begin to engage in reflective thinking on their own.

Personal Learning

As the researcher **and** interviewer in this study, one must note the importance of trying to differentiate the two roles. For me this was of particular difficulty, for I now recognize that I was guilty of perceiving the two roles as being interchangeable. Upon a review of the interview transcript, I noticed several problems, or rather perceived shortcomings in the participant responses not providing the *answer* I was looking for. These shortcomings can be attributed back to my inability to remain *just* an interviewer. At first I attributed this to poor wording and design of my questions. However, it quickly became evident to me that far too often, I slipped into the role of the researcher asking questions in a biased fashion. I changed questions or the way I asked existing questions during the interview to reflect my pre-conceived notions of what I was hoping to hear from the participants. I am now positive that I did this in order to validate my existing belief of the connection between the journaling exercise, the discussions, and more

importantly, how they would use reflection in their eventual clinical encounters with patients. This now seems a stretch, not so much in that that connection does not exist, but more because of my limited understanding of reflective thinking at the commencement of this study. To me, I envisioned the journaling as being a stand alone example of reflection in action, where students were developing the finite tools that they would carry forward with them into different situations. This was an immensely narrow understanding, for the interplay between the student's prior experiences, journal writing and group discussions provided a context to interrogate their underlying beliefs and thereby engage in reflection, not a prescribed protocol for engaging in reflection. It is strange to now realize that this type of narrow understanding is how I approached this study and its eventual findings. This study's express purpose was, to me, to provide a greater insight into the research question, and perhaps even provide the eventual framework for implementing a Weblog based reflective journaling study. Though there is an analysis of data that provides a greater understanding of student perceptions toward reflective journaling in the DPAS course, this study provided me with more of a context to interrogate the nature of qualitative research and my own shortcomings in this particular study. The notion that interview questions can be developed and changed to illicit a particular type of response brought my initial biases and assumptions to the forefront. As I discovered in the analysis, the most worthwhile findings emerged out of an understanding of the context the students described and not the direct responses to my questions. Therefore, without a more thorough understanding of reflective thinking, journaling and practice in context, I realize that I will not be able to overcome my biases and will taint any future studies by not being open to differing interpretations of the data.

Conclusion

While the initial student perceptions toward reflective journaling presented in this study might be useful in understanding students' experiences and better implementing future reflective journaling exercises, it must be recognized that these perceptions will shift. The immediate focus for further exploration might be that of distance (or lack thereof) by dominant students in order to facilitate reflective learning that is truly transformative. A more long term focus for exploration pertains to the ability to provide constructive feedback to a peer's idea, which might start with formal structures and hopefully would move to an individual adopting a process that is unique to them and their reflective thinking – this would also carry itself over to the individual's eventual professional practice (Schön, 1983).

Just as students' perceptions of journaling will shift as they gain greater familiarity with journaling, the researcher and course director realize that these perceptions will shift yet again with the eventual implementation of Weblogs as the primary medium for facilitating reflective journaling. It is hoped however, that by better understanding some of the limitations of its current forms, the reflective journaling process can be adapted to provide possible solutions to these limitations in whatever form the journaling may next take.

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Appendix 1

Interview Protocol

#1 – *Experience and Behaviour*

Not being a member of your class, nor being one of your instructors, I was hoping that someone could describe a typical DPAS afternoon to me.

- Would anyone like to add to that description?

#2 – *Opinion and Value*

If I was to try now to explain a typical afternoon to someone else, how might I best describe the different types of activities?

- In particular, the purpose of the lecture/plenary is...
- The purpose of the tutorial is...

#3 – *Opinion and Value*

In your opinion, where do the assigned readings fit (are they meant for the plenary, the tutorial, something else)?

#4 – *Knowledge*

Being dental students, could you share with me any examples of readings that you just could not relate to?

- Was it the content? Context?

#5 – *Knowledge*

How did you relate to the pieces pertaining to oral health?

- Did it make a difference in your tutorials (discussion)?

#6 – *Experience and Behaviour*

All of you are in an integrated curriculum with medical students, did you have a chance to discuss the readings pertaining to oral health with them?

- How do you think your medical peers related to these readings?
- How does that make you feel?

As you have been discussing the readings, the plenary and the tutorials, I get the sense that most of your experiences have revolved around the discussions you have with your peers and instructors.

#7 – Opinion and Value

I am curious then, what is your journal for?

- What are you writing about (in general terms)?
- May I ask someone to volunteer an example of what you write about in your journal.

#8 – Experience and Behaviour

Whom, if anyone, do you share these journal writings with?

- How does it make you feel to share your journal with this/these person(s)?
- Can you describe a time when you felt uncomfortable sharing your journal?
 - o Any examples of self-censoring?

#9 – Experience and Behaviour

For the ideas that you write about in your journal, how do you share these with your peers?

During the plenary session on Wednesday October 5th, the topic being “What is a reflective journal” by Dr. Conway, a few students mentioned in the group discussion that

they found the format of 1 journal entry at the beginning of the tutorial and then 1 at the end, as creating an artificial end to the topics you write about in the journals.

#10 – *Opinion and Value*

Are there times that you feel your writings in your journal (initial and then follow up) are incomplete?

- How do you continue with these writings?
- Are you able to build on them from week to week?
 - o In what way?

#11 – *Feeling*

Your peers in your tutorial group seem to be the ones that understand your ideas best. Is this a fair comment?

- Can you describe a situation in which you would feel comfortable allowing a peer in your tutorial group to READ your journal?
- How about a situation in which they provide you feedback regarding your writing?
- What might be the drawbacks of this process?
- What might be the benefits?

#12 – Other points of interest raised by group

- In particular, how they discuss their ideas with their peers.
- How they envision sharing and discussing ideas when in practice.

Appendix 2

Discussion relating to 'tact' – constructive feedback

Interview Participant #1_{dominant}: My only question then would be who would monitor that? You know, I think, whether you have tact in responding to someone's comments, is something that you either have or you don't. I feel like if you are willing to shoot someone down in a un-tactful way, now I think you will do it in the future as well. Personally, I do not know. I don't know how that would be monitored, you know, or even if it could be monitored.

Interview Participant #4_{dominant}: Yeah, I was thinking the same thing. If you are tactfully going about responding to people now, you are going to do it later on when you are in practice, but if you are not doing it now, or are not able to, you may or may not learn it through the groups.

Interview Participant #1_{dominant}: And how can you teach that?

Interview Participant #4_{dominant}: Yeah exactly, it is something that has to be self learned almost.

Interview Participant #1_{dominant}: What do you guys think?

Interview Participant #5_{quiet}: I'm not sure if tact is really the greatest of our concerns, just like looking at the 40 of us, especially if it's not anonymous, I don't see tact really being an issue at all. I think everyone can write a response tactfully and would.

Interview Participant #2_{quiet}: I think a better word than tact would be constructive feedback. I think that might just be the big word for it, you know, whether or not you are able to give feedback that is negative but also helpful, and said in a way that respects the person's ideas, then that is being tactful and that is constructive feedback. So I think that's what it really is, constructive feedback.

Interview Participant #1_{dominant}: I mean I would agree that saying, that I suppose the only reason that we started talking about 'tact' (laughter from the group), we got to stop saying that word. But I suppose the only reason that I'm discussing that now is that because I was under...I'm taking it from the perspective that we would be discussing very personal things, you know, openly. Or maybe harsh views, views where there are extreme opposing stances, and I mean, certainly there are many things that we write about in our journal that that would not be a concern at all. But there will be the odd thing, I'm sure, eventually, that we would discuss if someone were to feel like sharing or maybe not feel like sharing as a result, of being hesitant that someone might respond negatively.