



Expert Opinion: Ms Jane Stanford

"Revealing is part of creating an honest and shared learning environment"

The Article :

"Intellectual streaking: The value of teachers exposing minds (and hearts)"

Bearman, M. and Molloy, E. (2017).

[*Medical Teacher*, 39\(12\), pp.1284-1285.](#)

Case & Summary Author :

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Simulcast Journal Club is a monthly series that aims to encourage simulation educators to explore and learn from publications on Healthcare Simulation Education.

Each month we publish a case and link a paper with associated questions for discussion.

We moderate and summarise the discussion at the end of the month, including exploring the opinions of experts from the field.

The Case :

It had been 2 years since the simulation centre had opened and the champagne from the evening's celebration was flowing freely. Nitin sat on the couch sleepily, one arm around a Sim Man in a party hat and the other holding his glass. Across the way was Nimali, ever the educator, exploring with her fellow staff members the things they'd all learned together over the last 24 months. He could only hear the occasional murmur over the sounds of John Legend playing through the speakers, but the words "Name the dynamic" filtered through with clarity.

"Name the dynamic." he smiled wistfully at Sim Man. "That's not always easy to do, is it?". Sim Man, for his part, made no comment. Minutes later, Nimali walked up with a smile and jumped down on the couch between them.

"And what have you learned this year?" she asked Nitin warmly.

He gazed at her for a moment, and paused. "Emotion before cognition, I guess?" he stuttered. He stared hesitantly at her expression, it seemed framed with curiosity, compassion, and perhaps.... Just maybe, a hint of understanding? He took a breath.

"I've learned that you care about people, Nimali. This stuff isn't just words to you, you actually want people to thrive. I've learned that you show your vulnerabilities to help learners with their own..."

He cautiously edged his hand closer to hers.

"In this last year.... I've learned that I love you. I've loved you from the moment you explained to me the basic assumption and I realised you genuinely hold it for every person you meet." His speech quickened, gaining confidence and honesty.

"I don't know how you do that, how you can be such an expert yet so generous with your spirit. I struggle with that sometimes, I judge people privately a lot... but you.... I've never heard you say an unfair thing about anyone."

Gently, cautiously, scanning her face for any hint of repulsion or interest, he placed his hand on hers. "You're my safe container, Nimali Jones. I couldn't love you more if I".

But his words were cut short as Nimali leaned forward and kissed him on the lips.

Discussion :

In this month's case study, Nitin allows himself a moment of emotional vulnerability in order to get close to someone he cares about, but in doing so he also takes a risk. In Margaret Bearman and Elizabeth Molloy's 2017 article in *Medical Teacher*, they explore the benefits of 'Intellectual Streaking' whereby a facilitator is open and honest about their own knowledge deficits. As with Nitin's romantic overture, it is a move that has potentially significant benefits to rapport building, but done poorly may also have some unexpected drawbacks.

So in this very special second anniversary of our online journal club, what do you think of Intellectual Streaking? Is it a sophisticated move that rapidly creates rapport, or can it shatter the respect your learners have for you?

Bearman and Molloy argue that educators often strive to portray an unrealistic image of intellectual perfection.



With extensive prep, we cover our knowledge gaps...



All the while insisting to our learners it's OK to expose their flaws!



Expressing surprise when they remain guarded.

The authors argue some 'intellectual streaking' to expose a teacher's "uncertainties, internal dilemmas, emotions, thought processes, or failures can be illuminating and valuable for learners and teachers alike", and enhance learner engagement.



Although going overboard has risks...

Expert Opinion: Ms Jane Stanford, APLS Educator

Jane works in the role as Educator for Advanced Paediatric Life Support (Australia). In this position, Jane sees herself as a trainer - supporting high level athletes (passionate clinicians) playing a team sport (educating their peers) where the goal is not related to scores but personal satisfaction in teaching and learning. Over the past 6 years, she has seen different styles that support peer learning with groups that vary in terms of levels of experience and disciplines. As a trainer, much of the work is done behind the scenes and/or in watching the effects of behaviour. This helps Jane identify a range of options for others to draw on. As part of a Masters of Evaluation, Jane has led a research project that examined the validity of using a written test (the Script Concordance Test) for measuring clinical reasoning for APLS. This study was done as an extension of studies in Adult Education, where the complexity of isolating the effective elements of supporting change for motivated professional learners is an ongoing challenge. Outside of this, Jane loves being on the receiving end of others' creativity, especially if it has a random element!



This article appealed to me for several reasons; credible authors, article published in a respected educational peer-review journal, mischievous title and then a succinct outline of a behaviour - "revealing dilemmas", thought processes or failures for demonstration of resilience and "reflection in action".

Another title could have been "teaching with emotional intelligence", acknowledging that the processes of learning and application of knowledge in the context of uncertainty require more than a cognitive process¹.

An article by credible authors in an established health education journal provided external recognition (underpinned by theory and data) for the consequence of sharing vulnerability.

The title and succinctness of the article provided factors that I believed would increase the chances of the article being read and generating reflection and discussion. This was specifically for a cohort of clinicians who are volunteer teachers – interested and passionate but realistically not eager to decipher too much educational jargon. I had seen many of this cohort demonstrate a 'nimble' and wise use of personal reflection. The 'revealing' accompanied genuine anticipation of learners' potential challenges with either the learning experience (safe enough to feel uncomfortable) or enacting what would be cognitively OK to do, but practically difficult.

The main reason I share this article often is because I hope the article will assist in creating safety for facilitators! As Ian Summers mentioned, imposter syndrome carries its own burden; internal 'chatter' is a distraction and can prevent those facilitating from being in the moment, listening and responding to the learners.

French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre describes the internal tension of maintaining credibility in this way:

Merit has to be sought, just like truth; it is discovered with difficulty; one must deserve it. Once acquired, it is perpetually in question: a false step, an error, and it flies away. Without respite, from the beginning of our lives to the end, we are responsible for what merit we enjoy. (2 p. 19)

The response to imposter syndrome can vary and depends on the health of one's ego. I was interested to read an interpretation of Simone de Beauvoir's (1940s existentialist philosopher and fellow student of Sartre) response to imposter syndrome as an early female philosopher. "My curiosity was greater than my pride; I preferred learning to showing off."⁴ I wonder if this reflects how the frame of 'genuine curiosity for learning' enables the balance of what and how much is revealed and keeps the focus on a common goal.....enabling the situational awareness that 'keeps you fitter than security'.

In my support role, I have noted the response to facilitators revealing their inner discomfort/fear when performing lifesaving procedures, physical response/momentary paralysis when hearing the code for a child arrest, admitting that clinically *they* have lost situational awareness and/or expressing the discomfort of receiving honest feedback.

Like several of this month's contributors, I also have witnessed how the revealing gave permission for others to do so and it opened up the discussion to practical strategies for managing the fears, the physical shaking, the 'empty mind'. It created authenticity for being open to supporting team members, empathic listening and deeper self-reflection. The revealing was part of authenticity in putting knowledge or change into practice or creating an honest and shared learning environment.

However, clinicians who are unconsciously competent at supporting others' learning don't appear to be able to easily 'hear' positive feedback³.

I have been promoting the article as a way of *supporting facilitators* who I regarded as authentic, credible and caring teachers! This was because it articulates the behaviours I've seen, (as Jenny Rudolph's analogy conveys) 'holding' learners in the intellectual and emotional environment that enables growth and change.

1. Mortiboys A. Teaching with emotional intelligence : a step-by-step guide for higher and further education professionals. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge; 2012. ix, 166 .
2. Sartre J-P, Becker GJ. Anti-Semite and Jew: [New York] Schocken Books; 1948.
3. LaDonna KA, Ginsburg S, Watling C. 'Rising to the Level of Your Incompetence': What Physicians' Self-Assessment of Their Performance Reveals About the Imposter Syndrome in Medicine. *Academic Medicine*. 2018(5):763.
4. <https://qz.com/874930/i-was-suddenly-uncertain-of-my-true-capacity-simone-de-beauvoirs-daring-response-to-imposter-syndrome/>

Summary of this Month's Journal Club Discussion :

Blog Contributors :

- Shannon McNamara, Ben Symon, Melanie Barlow, Glenn Posner, Janine Kane, Sarah Janssens
- Susan Eller, Ian Summers, Victoria Brazil, Eve Purdy, Jenny Rudolph

This month's discussion was a lively interaction regarding the benefits of Intellectual Streaking. While there was widespread agreement that Intellectual Streaking was appreciated and of benefit to learners, this was followed by some unpacking of the specifics of 'when is it useful' and 'how much should we show'?

Overall themes included :

- Intellectual Streaking is regarded as a useful teaching tool
- Intellectual Streaking is of most benefit when used specifically to empower or educate learners
- Not everyone felt 'Streaking' is the right term

Intellectual Streaking is a useful teaching tool

Shannon McNamara, Mel Barlow and Janine Kane started the discussion by validating both the importance of the article and educator vulnerability. While acknowledging the importance of *'the yin of vulnerability and the yang of maintaining learner's confidence'*, there was strong support for the technique as a strategy to humanise educators and learners alike. As Janine states, *"Sharing our own vulnerabilities with our students and peers leads to a more open and honest experience for everyone"*.

Glenn Posner postulated that while the term is fun, the technique is really just a variation of the debriefing technique of normalisation. Intellectual Streaking, he argues, is an extension of *"the facilitator not only telling participants "this happens to learners all the time" but specifically, "this has happened to me"*.

Intellectual Streaking is of most benefit when used specifically to empower or educate learners

After asking the group where the line between 'appropriate' and 'too much' vulnerability sat, we began to tease out some interesting specifics. Ben argued that *"demonstrating personal vulnerability and intellectual streaking is of most benefit when it is shared in the interests of the learners, rather than shared because it's of interest to the educator."* Streaking is not always done to benefit the learners, sometimes it can be to maintain dominance, to avoid criticism or to maintain focus on the educator.

Jenny Rudolph extended her safe container for learning analogy to explore fallibility. *"Imagine that learning is relational and dependent on "being held", not just a cold intellectual activity. Vulnerability and fallibility by teacher/educator/instructor needs to be a "dose" that does not threaten the perceived integrity of the holding environment. So I've noticed that when I admit I've made a mistake with a lightness or humor but clearly "keep my balance", learners seem to respond very well. I believe it would be a different story if I appeared to be ashamed or deeply discombobulated myself because then that threatens the holding environment that I am creating."*

So what's the right balance? As Ian Summers put it :

Use sparingly. Like all good (intellectual) strips: leave a little to the imagination, choreograph for effect and light carefully. And be fitter than security

Not everyone felt 'Streaking' is the right term

Vic Brazil, Eve Purdy and Shannon McNamara all voiced concern that streaking is in some ways the wrong term. While appreciating that the innate humour of the discussion would aid translation of the concept, Vic argued that *"I think streaking is perhaps a poor analogy, as i'm not sure most of the naked folks running across the cricket field are exposing vulnerability... they are mostly showing off, drawing attention and causing trouble."*

Eve Purdy doubled down on this by providing us with a fascinating history of *actual streaking* and its use as a tool of dominance and attention seeking. She closed the discussion beautifully with the following caution :

"If stories and anecdotes don't bring us closer to learners or learners closer to each other, rather they act to re-territorialize something we feel we are losing then we just aren't doing it right."

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Thank you to all commenters this month for sharing your thoughts and allowing us to learn from you.

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References :

1. [Bearman, M. and Molloy, E. \(2017\). Intellectual streaking: The value of teachers exposing minds \(and hearts\). *Medical Teacher*, 39\(12\), pp.1284-1285.](#)