

Draft #2

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Test of the Teeth: Assimilating into a Dentist's Office

Introduction: audience attention grabber!! short bio and what the paper is about (thesis) also describe the background of the assignment and the job shadowing

Going to the dentist can be a stressful endeavor, especially if you don't brush your teeth! It can be even more stressful if you are visiting for an interview or as an intern. Assimilating into any workplace is difficult. With the high competition rates to get into graduate school and the jobs afterward, dentistry is no exception. As someone who aspires to be a dentist, it is necessary for me to observe the environment and ask questions to better acquaint myself with my future workplace. I did this by job shadowing a local dentist at his office. I observed that the different hierarchies of power within job titles are based off of experience, and that although tedious and time-consuming, assimilation is relatively easy and aided by other members.

P1: describe how the office counts as a discourse community using Swales' model, describe the characteristics and interactions, describe how lexis and literacy play a role, define Discourse and discourse, primary and secondary, genre

When observing the office, it was clear that all the people there worked together as one unit, each knew their job and how to do it, and even other's job titles and duties."”(from

interview?) Swales gives 6 criteria that a group must satisfy in order to be considered a true discourse community. A discourse community is ...(). These criteria are: (LIST THEM)

1. The goal of the office is to assist people with their oral hygiene, and to correct dental problems (if any).
2. The methods of intercommunication include verbal interactions, written notes, and meetings (I have not yet had a chance to visit the office yet so the exact methods could vary; these are speculated).
3. Members give and receive feedback through patient interaction.
4. The office is open specific times of the day and on certain days of the week, and the people who work there are present in the office consistently based on their individual work schedules.
5. The lexis used is scientific, and cannot easily be understood by the general public.
6. There are different levels of experience and authority within the office.

This is why I think that the office I attended qualifies as a discourse community. A discourse community needs to communicate through different genres, and I noticed in my visit(s) that this is definitely utilized. A genre is "" (). Some of the tools the dentists use are quite loud, and so the doctor and his assistant would sometimes just use motions to indicate they wanted a specific object. One example of this was just pointing, and, since the assistant or other dentist knew what procedure was going on, they knew what was needed immediately. There also were patient charts that indicated what teeth were being worked on. The teeth were numbered so the workers can keep track of which teeth are damaged and need worked on. The lexis used included the names of these teeth and the different positions that cavities could occur. While some words

like crown (a tooth shaped cap that covers a damaged tooth and prevents additional harm) and filling (something that fixes a cavity) can be understood by the public, others cannot. You probably did not know that the lingual side of your tooth is the part that touches your tongue (linguistics=different “tongues” or languages). Dentistry as a literacy involves reading the signs in someone’s mouth and teeth to diagnose a problem or give a bill of clean health.

P2: talk about the discourse and what other work has already been done on it; introduce your research questions, claim a niche; and how you plan to acquire the results

Some studies have been done on dentistry as a discourse community, such as “” and “”. But no one has written about what it is like to assimilate into the field and workplace. This is what I aimed to accomplish with my research. The questions that I answered were “Due to the competitiveness of the field, are new members more likely to be ignored and used than accepted and appreciated?” and “Do the different positions in the setting have different hierarchies of power based on experience, or assertiveness?”. I did not obtain the answers to these questions by asking them outright, but rather by quietly observing the sidelines and then asking specific questions to see if my observations were, in fact, correct. I planned on acquiring the results of these questions by interviewing several occupants there with different job titles, and giving out a short survey to most of the staff. I also planned on documenting my feelings of “assimilating” into the office and determining if I noticed any hierarchy of leadership or power within separate career fields.

P3: talk about the goals of the study, the process of what you have done (interviewing and experiences) and methodology how you felt assimilating and what people said

The goals of this study were to answer the research questions mentioned above and also gain some experience in the job field I someday wish to occupy. While observing, I noticed that most employees knew not only their job, but others' jobs as well. Using this information, they knew who to ask when something that needed to be done did not reside within the boundaries of what they could do. For example: dental assistants may clean teeth, but are usually not allowed to fill in a cavity by themselves.

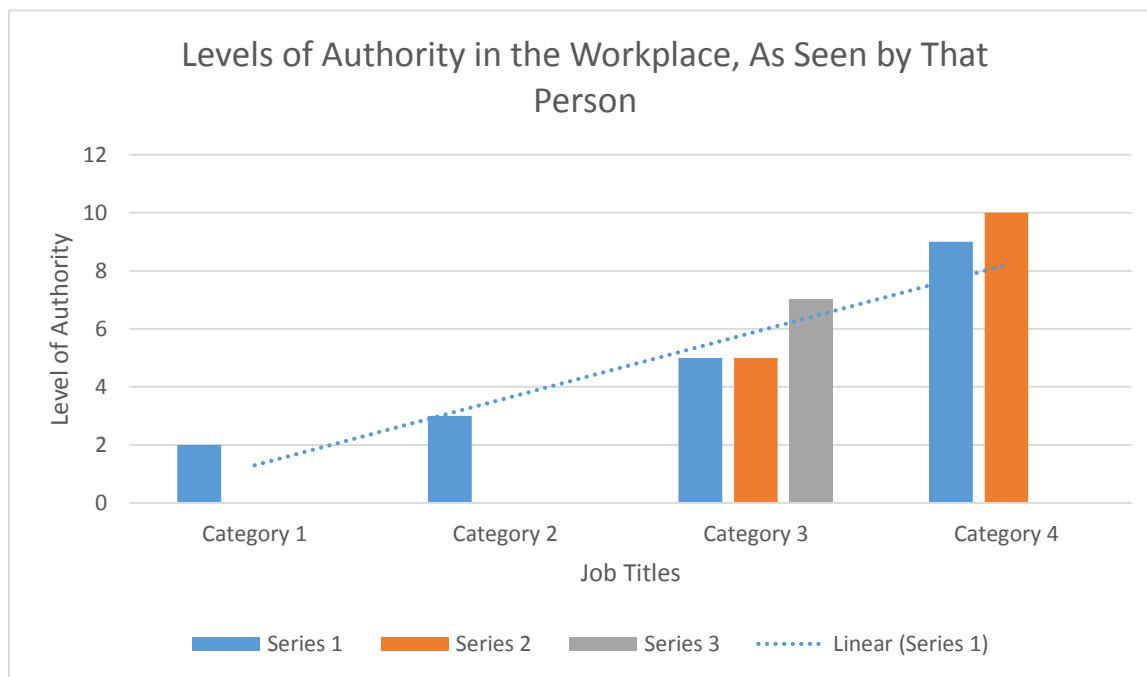
I printed off 20 surveys but only ended up distributing seven. This was due to the size of the office and the number of its personnel. I also only ended up interviewing one person, but I added some side questions into the interview that I thought might yield interesting results. This person requested to remain anonymous, and so for all intents and purposes of this essay she will be referred to as Brenda.

(HAVE NOT VISITED A SECOND TIME TO ACQUIRE MORE RESULTS, might interview a second person)

P4: Talk about the results of the study, answer your survey questions, Make a graph and put it into the paper (from the survey results) and reference it in the text, prove the answers or disprove the incorrect one

In hindsight, I failed to realize that leadership and authority can be influenced not only by who is more assertive or good at their job but also by how long the occupant has been working at that specific place. Their prior experience at other locations could also play a role. I probably should have added "years working at this career" and "years at this facility" as questions in my survey. Although I distinguished between experience and assertiveness in my research question, I failed to keep distinguishing between the two. The different levels of authority within

occupations are indeed determined mostly by experience, but when I interviewed Brenda and looked at the results of the survey another fact came to light. No one at the office wanted to be viewed as “better than” their peers. To them, it was a community in which everyone got along. So some preserved this instead of using their authority to its full potential. The results of the survey (Appendix) were also interesting, with the numbers ranging from 2-10. They also ended up being split into four different job categories that increased in number. The two dentists at the top said 10 and 9; the three dental assistants said 5,5, and 7; the admin and dental hygienist said 3 and 2 respectively. As can be seen by the graph (where category 1 refers to RDH, category 2 refers to admin, category 3 refers to dental assistant, and category 4 refers to dentist), the distribution of this curve is relatively exponential.



As for assimilation, in my experiences it was relatively easy. Everyone was very nice to me, and I could tell they were being genuine about it as well.

The answers to these questions could also be skewed due to the fact that the office is so small, being located in what looks to be a house (PICTURE?). The relations between the workers are that of family, and so there is not a lot of competition happening, which might be seen in a bigger office.

Conclusion: Sum up the results and what was obtained from the study

Appendix: Put a copy of the survey and the interview questions here, make sure to reference them in the paper!! Also transcribe your interview from the recording here Do another interview and ask about discourse community? How does it fit the criteria

APPENDIX

Survey Questions

Occupational Title:

How many hours a week are you in the office?

On a scale from 1-10 (10 being the highest), how much authority would you say you have in the office?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

On a scale from 1-10 (10 being the most difficult), how hard was it to assimilate into this work environment?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Thank you!!

Interview Questions

1. Is there a hierarchy of authority within occupations in the office?

IF YES:

A. How would you explain this hierarchy?

B. Who has the most leadership/ is “in charge”?

2. What was your first day in the office like?

3. How long did it take for you to feel like a member of the workplace community?

4. What are some struggles you overcame throughout that process?

5. Do you have anything to add that you think would be important to know?

Thank you!!!

Works Cited

Swales, John.