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Title

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

Introduction

The discourse community that I have chosen to observe is part of a broader community that I hope to someday assimilate into myself. It is a dentist's office in Cincinnati. I hope to become a dentist, and find the interactions that occur in this type of workplace fascinating. The interview processes and time spent at the office can also help me get an adequate understanding of what skills are required for the position. Hypotheses that I have include that there are sub-divisions of power and leadership within the different groups (such as secretaries and dental assistants), and that new members have a difficult time earning respect or even common courtesy from their fellow employees.

Background

I think this office is a discourse community because it fulfills all of Swales' criteria. All of the people who work in the office interact with each other and the same patients.

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.

Research Questions

My research questions include:

Due to the competitiveness of the field, are new members more likely to be ignored and used than accepted and appreciated?

Do the different positions in the setting have different hierarchies of power based on experience, or assertiveness?

Methodology

Throughout my visits to the office, I will interview several people who have different jobs and different amounts of experience in those positions. I will also attempt to have every employee fill out a survey of my creation.

Goals

My goals include determining the amount of resistance towards newcomers from the group, and discerning the different levels of power and authority within the different specific positions in the office.

Biography

Robin Bearss is a Biology Major on the Pre-Med track. She plans to use this project to better acquaint herself with the field of work she hopes to employ. She has never job-shadowed or interviewed before, and so also plans to excel in both of these skill sets throughout the process.