

Jaron Smith

What is a Discourse Community?

My definition of a discourse community that I have come up with, after reading many articles about discourse communities, is a group of people who all share common knowledge, goals, and purposes in a certain subject. A more scholarly definition comes from John Swales who refers to a discourse community as being made up of individuals who share a “broadly agreed upon set of common public goals”, that it has “mechanisms of intercommunication among its members”, and that there is a “reasonable ratio of novices and experts” (Writing About Writing 723). Another important part of defining a discourse community comes from James Paul Gee. He says that Discourse is the “saying-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations” are the ways of being in a discourse community (Gee 481). Those qualities of a discourse community are all things that the members do in the Human Service discourse community everyday.

What is Human Services?

Human Service specialization is an option when majoring in Sociology. Unlike the Human Resource specialization the Human Service specialization deals directly with helping people that are in need. This can range from mentally challenged people, elderly people, the youth, and everyone in between. In order to specialize in this type of discourse, students are expected to take extra classes along with the already required classes with the Sociology major. A few of these classes required include: Introduction to Social Work, Social Work Skills and Methods I, and also an internship is required to gain experience in the field (Sociology Major).

The Criminal Justice minor explained

The Criminal Justice minor is a big part of the Human Service specialization. Knowing the law and how to guide people through a troubled life is exactly what a person will get out of studying Criminal Justice. Human Service discourse community members will need to know exactly how to guide people in society, and to make sure that they get the help they need. Studying Criminal Justice is a big part of knowing the language of this certain discourse community. Being knowledgeable of the law will help members of this community when it comes to dealing with the people they are helping.



Types of text used in Human Services discourse community

Probation officer assistants and Social Service workers have different job descriptions, but both use very similar types of text.

-Probation OfficerAssistant

- A probation officer assistant's job is obviously to assist the probation officer. One common type of text used by probation assistants are case files, and the most important job of a probation officer assistant is to keep track of these case files (Probation Assistant). Case files, as the name implies, is a file that contains all information in the case of a certain client. This can include anything from the urine sample tests results that a probation assistant collects to the amount of restitution that a client still owes (Probation assistant).



"That's Kevin's new tagging device!"

-Social Services Worker

- The type of text that a social service worker uses is an interview process to gather information and build a case file. During an interview social service workers will interview the clients as well as their family members in order to determine the amount and type of social service needed (Social Service Worker). The type of social service needed depends on the quality of household relationships and financial status along with a number of other factors (Social Service Worker).

Terminologies and Research Methods used in Human Services

- As is in any discourse community, there are many common terminologies that need to be known by members of the Human Service discourse community. These include types of research methods and abbreviations.

Terminologies-

- A few types of abbreviations that members of the Human Service discourse community are expected to know are YCM or Youth Case Management and CIU or Crisis Intervention Unit (Human Service Abbreviations). Both of these terms deal directly with social service work and being a probation assistant and are expected to be known by members of the discourse community.

Research Methods-

- One important form of research in this discourse community is the the research of why people act the way they do, and how to help them. One way of describing and studying this is by using qualitative analysis. Unlike quantitative, another popular use of analysis is this discourse community, qualitative deals with the “quality of a relationship” rather than “quantity” (Neuman 352). This form of research is important for social service workers because when interviewing clients they are looking to figure out the quality of those clients living situations in order to determine the type of help they need.

Technology use in Human Services

Technology use is not a big part of Human Services, but at times still plays a role.



As is the case in many discourse communities computer use is common with the Human Service discourse community. When workers are interviewing clients they will go back to their office and type up a report, making it easier to access the files for their clients. This is about as big a role that technology plays when considering the Human Service discourse community

Reasons for choosing Human Services

- A major deciding factor is that people want to be “working with people” (Sociology and Rural Studies). Rather than working with a group of people in a big office type setting, individuals work one on one with their clients in order to solve problems.
- Another reason why people choose to become members of this discourse community is for the job opportunities. Along with being a probation assistant and social services worker there are many other job opportunities dealing with social work and domestic violence.
- People with a strong desire to help people in society often choose the Human Service discourse community.

Conclusion and Summary

The members of the Human Service discourse community take their work just as serious as any other discourse community. Whether it be nursing or teaching, Human Service members put forth just as much effort and work and need to have just as much knowledge about the certain field they go in to. Once in members continue learning new things that they didn't already know. Members of the Human Service discourse community never stop learning new ways of how to help people, and never stop using the ways they learned early on in their membership. Helping to give people the best life possible in their current situations is what the Human Service discourse community is all about.

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