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Rhetorical Paper

When writing for a specific field of science, one must ensure their writing fits the conventions of that field to help further scientific knowledge (Penrose, Katz). Various pieces of communication must be observed to be well acquainted with the conventions of that specific field. This paper will analyze three journal articles from the field of psychology, all pulled from PsycInfo, specifically papers regarding how to increase empathy in a medical setting. The choices made to write the journal articles will be analyzed; this will be done so by looking at elements such as credibility, diction, and syntax. Then, the overall effectiveness of the writing will be evaluated as well.

In their research article “Eliciting Clinical Empathy via Transmission of Patient-specific Symptoms of Parkinson’s Disease”, Palanica, Thommandram, and Fossat use a device called SymPlus to playback muscle tremors using an armband to give users an experience of involuntary muscle activity that a patient with Parkinson’s disease (PD) would experience. This is done to determine whether participants wearing the SymPulse device would generate enhanced feelings of empathy or not. The results showed significant increases in empathy for those wearing the device versus those not wearing the device displaying the effectiveness of using such technology to elicit tele-empathy and can have positive effects in clinical and healthcare education settings. The structure of the paper follows that of a normal scientific study: abstract, introduction, methods, results, and discussion. One effective factor the authors made was providing a short biography of the first author on the first page under the abstract. This allowed the authors, mainly the primary author, to establish their credibility. In this biography, Palanica included that he got his Ph.D. in Cognitive Neuroscience Psychology from the University of

Waterloo. He also briefly discusses his current work, where he serves “as a behavioral scientist in the health-care field and helps to bring new insights and methodologies for research with pharmaceutical companies, hospitals, rehabilitation institutes, health-care professionals, caregivers, and patients” (Palanica et al. 1). By providing this information, this further builds his credibility and demonstrates he is capable of what is being researched in this paper. Another beneficial element the authors implemented was diction. In the introduction section of their paper, they define critical terms necessary to understand what they are researching. An example of this is tele-empathy, which they define as “ a class of technology used to accurately identify, digitize, and characterize symptoms in a specific patient to generate a representative physiological response in a non-patient to elicit empathy for a particular health condition” (Palanica et al. 3). Defining critical terms is necessary because terms such as tele-empathy can have generic meanings and assuming the audience already knows these terms can lead to miscommunication about what one’s research is about. By defining critical terms in the introduction is strategic as it is early on in the paper so the reader will know what the research refers to when said terms are brought up throughout the paper. By establishing credibility and tactically defining constructs, Palanica, Thommandram, and Fossat were able to effectively communicate their research to their audience.

In their systematic review “Digital Storytelling in Older Adults with Typical Aging, and with Mild Cognitive Impairment or Dementia: A Systematic Literature Review”, Rincon, Cruz, Daum, Neubauer, Comeau, and Liu perform a literature review to determine the use of storytelling facilitated through digital technology in older adults and their care partners. 34 studies were used and the authors found that, although its effectiveness was low, digital storytelling was mainly used to support older adults’ memory, reminiscence, identity, and

self-confidence. Similar to the previous research article discussed, this review followed the same scientific format, including an abstract, methods, results, and discussion. This is a convention of the field since the majority of studies and reviews have been published in this format. An effective strategy that Rincon et al. used was the utilization of tables. They used many tables to display the results obtained from their research, such as the purpose of stories and the study designs of the papers they used for their review. This aids the authors in effectively getting their information across because the data obtained is represented in a clear and organized manner. Another important element they added was the inclusion of a limitations section. Here they mention that they tried to be as inclusive as possible in all aspects of their research, but they may have missed papers that were not published nor indexed in the databases they used (Rincon et al. 12). By declaring this within the paper, they let the readers know that there may still be more articles available on the topic they have researched. Overall, Rincon et al. were able to effectively convey their findings on the use of digital storytelling in older patients and their care partners through following their fields conventions, organized data representation, and establishing the limitations they met during their research.

In their article “Narrative Empathy and How Dealing with Stories Helps: Creating a Space for Empathy in Culturally Diverse Care Setting”, Moore and Hallenbeck discuss the importance of sharing narratives to strengthen interpersonal relationships and other improvements in wellbeing. They then discuss how this can prevent miscommunication between the physician and the patient plus their family. Moore and Hallenbeck believe that fostering narrative empathy can improve decision-making and health care outcomes. One effective element the authors provide is the organization they are associated with. They list notable institutions such as Stanford School of Medicine and the Division of Cancer Control and

Population Sciences. This establishes their credibility, letting the reader know that they are well versed and qualified to write on the matter. The authors also start off with quotes about stories from writers. This is an effective tool because using these quotes serves as a hook, which captures the audience's attention. Aside from the hook, Moore and Hallenback appeal to pathos by stating the benefits of narrative empathy for patients. For example, they declare that "narrative empathy is that mutual understanding in the clinical context of how stories lives overlap, experiences are shared, and life's events and struggles, including pain, suffering, loss, and illness "fit" into a larger life narrative" (Moore and Hallenbeck. 474). By establishing the benefits of narrative empathy, they are displaying why the reader should care about and want this in the field. It touches on wellbeing which is important for everyone. Thus, Moore and Hallenback were able to successfully convey the benefits of narrative empathy in medical settings through establishing their credibility, drawing readers in with a hook, and appealing to pathos.

Overall, the three articles are all effective in establishing their intent. However, "Narrative Empathy and How Dealing with Stories Helps: Creating a Space for Empathy in Culturally Diverse Care Setting" was the most different in terms of structure and style. This could be contributed to the fact that the other two articles researched a specific topic while the article by Moore and Hallenback was an article. Based on this, one can conclude that research papers in this field follow the scientific paper structure, having an abstract, introduction, methods, results, and discussion. Articles of this field do not follow that structure. Despite their difference in paper type, they do have similar diction and break their sections into subtopics which helps with the organization and flow of all their papers. Also, one of the research papers and the article both establish their credibility by stating the institutions they are connected to.

The articles all define critical terms at the beginning of their pieces as well. One thing to further explore next time is other articles within this field. Thus, although different types of writing pieces in this field do not always have the same structure, they do use similar diction, establish their credibility, and establish key terms at the beginning of their papers. Through this, they are able to successfully convey their ideas.

References

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