



An Ethnographic Study Of The Role Of Humor In Health Care Transactions (Studies in Health and Human Services)

Lance R. Lippert, Stephen K. Hunt

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This book examines conversational humor in communicative exchanges during the health care transaction. Our focus is on interactive humor at a specific cultural site as it actually occurs. This study is based on the assumption that the participants at this site routinely engage in some form of humor exchange during interpersonal communication in health care transactions. Given the prevalence of humor use in the health setting, as well as the lack of attention devoted to this important phenomenon in the extant literature, this study set out to explore two fundamental questions. The first question that must be addressed is: If the participants (nurse and resident) in a long term care relationship construct conversational humor or participate in humor exchanges, what are the humorous exchanges accomplishing? What functions do they serve? The second question deals with the humor strategies and their organization by the participants: How are the humor exchanges being accomplished? In other words, what humor strategies and communicative behaviors do the participants apply during health care transactions? Nursing homes operate as homes for millions in this country's aging population. Because nursing homes more often call for prolonged care rather than a cure, interpersonal communication is even more crucial to this care giving context. Humor use is one way the participants in this study interpersonally confronted the rigors of old age and institutional care. The humor exchanges enhance the communicative climate and multiply the chances for quality care outcomes. This book sheds new light on the role of humor in long term care facilities and offers educators, practitioners, and researchers a powerful tool for better understanding communication in this context.

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