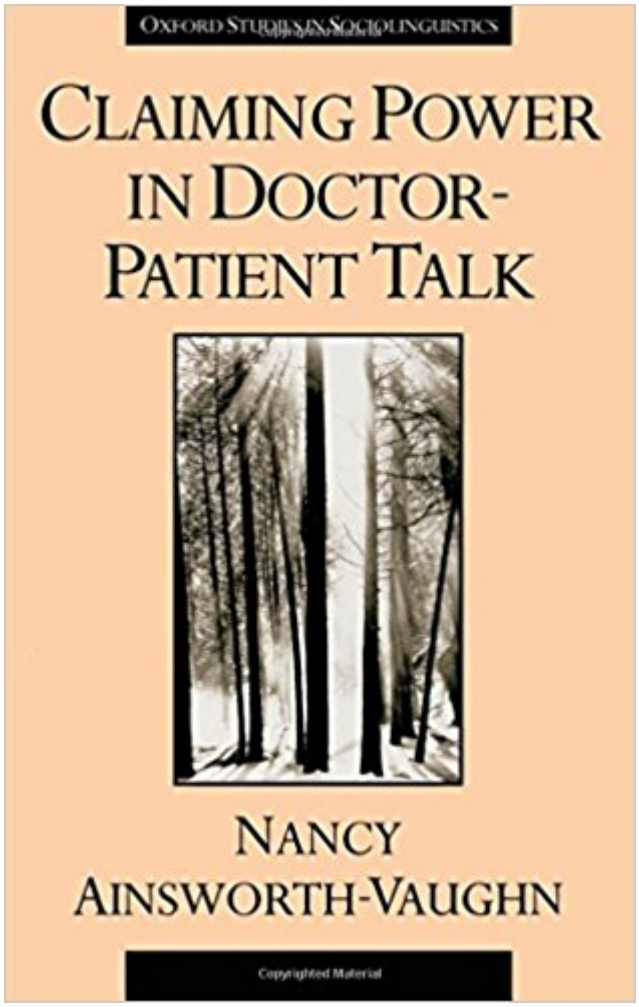
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Claiming Power In Doctor-Patient Talk (Oxford Studies In Sociolinguistics)



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Synopsis

Nancy Ainsworth-Vaughn studied stories, topic control, "true" questions, and rhetorical questions in 101 medical encounters in US private-practice settings. In exceptionally lucid and accessible style, Ainsworth-Vaughn explains how power was claimed by and co-constructed for both patients and doctors (previous studies have focused upon doctors' power). The discourse varied along a continuum from interview-like talk to conversational talk. Six chapters are organized around data and include extended examples of actual talk in detailed transcription; four of these data-oriented chapters focus upon dynamic, moment-to-moment use of speech activities in emerging discourse, such as doctors' and patients' stories that co-constructed selves, and a patient's sexual rhetorical questions. Two more chapters offer non-statistical quantitative data on the frequency of questioning and sudden topic changes in relation to gender, diagnosis, and other factors. Contributing to discourse theory, Ainsworth-Vaughn significantly modifies previous definitions for topic transitions and rhetorical questions and discovers the role of storytelling in diagnosis. The final chapter provides implications for physicians and medical educators.

Book Information

Series: Oxford Studies in Sociolinguistics

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (June 25, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 019509607X

ISBN-13: 978-0195096071

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #503,898 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #50 inÃ Â Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods > Postmodernism #154 inÃ Â Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Clinical > Physician & Patient #215 inÃ Â Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Doctor-Patient Relations

Customer Reviews

"This book is an important landmark in doctor-patient literature. In a unique way, the book combines empathy with the patients with an understanding of the doctors."-- Britt-Louise Gunnarsson, Uppsala University Convener, Scientific Commission on Communications and the Professions,

AILA"Ainsworth-Vaughn has developed a data collection technique which gives her a reliable basis for extracting generalizable patterns while keeping sight of individual variation. It should serve as model for any conversation-based investigation that aims at being socially relevant."-- Madeleine Mathiot, State University of New York at Buffalo"More than any other work in the last two decades, Ainsworth-Vaughn's examination of the medical encounter brings clarity and insight into this fundamental speech event in western society. . . . Her critical and constructive conclusions will have a profound impact on any reader who has an interest in how power is negotiated when health and lives are at stake."-- Kathleen Ferrara, Texas A&M University"With unprecedented access to private clinical discourse, Ainsworth-Vaughn offers a rare confluence of quantitative and qualitative analysis. This book immeasurably enriches our view of doctor-patient communication."--Deborah Tannen, Georgetown University"Claiming Power in Doctor-Patient Talk is one of the most original, elegant, and penetrating texts in the literature of health-care communication. It is, in my opinion, a seminal work that will have far-reaching impact in the future education and practice of medicine."--The Lancet

Nancy Ainsworth-Vaughn is Associate Professor in the Department of English at Michigan State University. She is also the author of Current Topics in Language (1976).

For the person who wrote the negative review, please note that even the most cursory glance at this book's cover would tell you that it was never intended to be something you would find in the self-help section at your local bookstore. For one thing, it's in the Oxford Studies in Sociolinguistics series. That suggests, at a minimum, that it is an academic text, not a consumer's how-to guide for talking to your doctor. The back of the cover states that the book would be a "powerful pedagogical tool...for language classes...and...clarification of clinical issues." It states further that its topics include discourse theory, topic transitions, and co-construction. A consumer's guide on patient-doctor talk would probably have less academic terminology and subject matter and, more importantly, like this text has clearly done, state its subject matter and target audience.

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