

Worldbuilding Research Presentation Outline

I. Introduction

A. Hook / Lead-In

1. Imagine losing a part of your body. It could be an arm, a leg, a finger, or even an eye, but no matter what, one thing is clear: your life would change forever. Think of all of the daily tasks that would suddenly become impossible without help, all of your favorite activities that you are now forced to struggle through or simply give up. Sustaining such trauma to the body is bound to have a major impact on the mind as well.

B. Research Question

1. How do physical disability and prosthetic aids alter an amputee's perception of themselves and others?
2. Central Claim / Answer: Amputation comes with a plethora of mental health challenges, including social isolation, stress, loss of independence, and more. While struggling to reconcile with their physical limitations, amputees can grow resentful of able-bodied people out of frustration with their own disability.

C. Audience Significance

1. If you never stopped to think about how much of a privilege it is to be able-bodied, this is an opportunity to consider the perspectives of those who were denied that privilege and deepen your empathy for the amputee community.

II. Evidence

A. Source 1: "Psychological Consequences in Patients With Amputation of a Limb. An Interpretative-Phenomenological Analysis"

1. Credibility: Written by experts in Orthopedics and Traumatology, Sociology-Psychology, and Psychology and Educational Sciences. All three of these specialties are relevant to the topic of psychological effects of amputation.
2. Key Finding: The six most prominent themes among the consequences of limb amputation are "(1) emotional impact, (2) negative affects, (3) tendency toward isolation, (4) role constraints and limitations, (5) phantom limb phenomenon, and (6) emotional balancing."
3. Relevance: My research question asks about the psychological effects of amputation, which is directly addressed in this article through academic analysis of the psychological consequences of limb amputation.

B. Source 2: "The Psychological and Somatic Consequences of Digital Amputation"

1. **Credibility:** Written by experts from the Departments of Orthopedics and Plastic Surgery at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, a teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School. Harvard being among the most well-respected academic institutions in America, this gives the article strong credibility and indicates that the authors are well-qualified to speak on the topic.
2. **Key Finding:** Even “minor” amputations can lead to significant psychological distress. This source explains that regardless of the severity of the amputation, all amputees experience psychological damage to some degree. In addition, physical consequences of digital amputation include “a loss of motion, sensation, grip/pinch strength, and function.”
3. **Relevance:** This article addresses a more nuanced facet of my research question, which is that people with different severities of amputation will face different long-term consequences as a result. Under the umbrella of “what are the psychological effects of amputation?” is “how do minor amputations differ in their psychological impact to that of major amputations?”

C. Source 3: “The return home: Disability experiences of Second World War Veterans with amputations”

1. **Credibility:** Written by occupational therapists in the School of Rehabilitation Science at McMaster University, a well-respected academic institution. These authors’ positions and expertise make them qualified to discuss struggles veterans face following traumatic limb amputation. This article’s references span from the past decade back to the mid 20th century, encompassing both current and historically relevant accounts of the topic.
2. **Key Finding:** Among male World War II veteran amputees, it is common for individuals to mask how their disability affects them as an affirmation of strength and masculinity. Many veterans in the study felt a sense of pride when others couldn’t tell they had an amputation.
3. **Relevance:** This source provides information on a much more specific facet of the consequences of major amputations, notably within a predominantly older, male demographic (World War II veterans). In other words, this article provides valuable information about how amputation specifically affects the psychology of adult men.

D. Source 4: “‘After Cutting It, Things Have Never Remained the Same’: A Qualitative Study of the Perspectives of Amputees and Their Caregivers”

1. Credibility: Written by professors, two in the Department of Behavioral Sciences at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and two in the Department of Psychology at the University of Ghana. These authors' expertise make them qualified to discuss the psychological struggles of amputees and their caregivers.
2. Key Finding: Both amputees and their caregivers experience stress and hardship, the primary cause of which is different for each group. Amputees tend to socially withdraw themselves, traumatized and isolated. On the other hand, caregivers struggle with economic hardship and lack support to handle their exhaustion and major responsibility.
3. Relevance: This source provides much needed information about how amputees navigate life with a loss of independence, and how their disability also affects their loved ones. The feeling of vulnerability and loss following an amputation, combined with feeling like a burden to those around you, are key facets of how amputation alters an individual's perception of themselves and others.

III. Implications

A. What the Evidence Means

1. All amputees' experiences are different, but they all suffer mental health issues to some degree related to their disability. Some are most focused on their new physical limitations, while others are fixated on the social stigma and being perceived as a visibly disabled person. Some see their disability as something to be ignored and concealed, a weakness that threatens their independence and self-confidence. Others see it as an injustice, furious that they must suffer in such a way. Coping mechanisms for these struggles are often harmful, such as self-isolation or denial. However, with proper support, amputees can develop constructive coping strategies and learn to properly reintegrate into society.

B. Why This Matters / What's at Stake

1. It is our responsibility to unravel the social stigma surrounding visible disability, and to stop the "othering" of amputees. We must also work to build a more tolerant and accessible society for the betterment of us all. Failing to do so will continue the cycle of oppression of disabled people, denying them the support they need to truly thrive.

IV. Conclusion

A. Further Questions

1. Would people who were born with limb deformities (specifically lacking a portion of their limb(s)) experience less trauma than those who underwent limb amputation later in life, due to not actively experiencing the loss of a limb that was once there?
2. How do the accommodations for “minor” amputees differ from those required by major amputees?
3. How common is the denial of one’s own disability as a coping mechanism among amputees, and how does this attitude harm the rest of the community?
4. With advanced enough prosthetic support and an accessible society, can major amputees live without the help of a caregiver? How would society have to change to facilitate this independence?

B. Final Takeaways

1. Whether it’s through denial, isolation, bitterness, depression, etc., mourning the loss of a limb is a devastating experience. It is crucial to uphold systems of support and understanding for amputees, helping them to readjust to their new “normal” and learn to cope with their trauma in healthy ways. As a society, we have a responsibility to build an accessible world for all.

C. Applications to Storyworld

1. As a society composed only of amputees, my storyworld will be strongly influenced by the psychological effects of amputation. I will build several character conflicts off of amputees’ struggles with social integration and self-comparison with more able-bodied people, as part of a larger, ableist societal structure/culture.