

# FACEWORK & THE NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITY IN ONLINE CLASS DISCUSSIONS

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# Overview

- Research Question
- Background Assumptions
- Methodology & Expectations
- Findings
- Implications

# Research Question(s)

- Discussion board = effective tool for teaching
- What are the relationships between identity development, knowledge creation, and discourse in the online classroom?
- How can instructors best facilitate learning by helping students develop and display identity in interaction?

# 1. Background

1. Discussion board = nexus of learning
2. Identity formed in discourse
3. Face = identity-based resource;  
public self-image

# Facework

- Facework: set of communicative behaviors/strategies used to enact, enhance, preserve, affront, or destroy face
- Facework Strategies :
  - Express solidarity by claiming common ground
  - Express respect with mode of address or flattery
  - Express restraint by hedging or apologizing
  - Avoid confrontation with off-record or indirect facework
  - Invite challenge by bald insult

# Methodology & Expectations

Qualitative Analysis of Discussion in  
COMM 495 Senior Seminar Capstone

Facework Analysis of Discussion Board  
identity-display

1. Personal Identity
2. Academic Identity
3. Scholar-Professional Identity

# COMM 495 Formal Writing

1. Curricular Portfolio with Analytical Reflection
2. Professional/Academic Research Project
  - a. Proposal
  - b. Annotated Bibliography
  - c. Progress Report
  - d. Summary Report
  - e. First Draft (Peer Reviewed)
  - f. Presentation
  - g. Final Draft

# Facework & Identity on Discussion Board

1. Personal Identity
2. Academic Identity
3. Scholar-Professional Identity



# Findings

- Samantha
- Carol
- Tony

# Samantha

## Personal Identity:

“I lived in the same small town in Michigan my entire life. I thought I had life all figured out. Then we moved to Europe...I realized that I didn't know too much about anything!”

# Samantha

## Academic Identity:

“I am a much different person today than I was when I began my studies...I grew up in a small town. I lived in the same house my entire life... It was only when I moved overseas that I realized that there is so much more to communication than I knew....

“One common thread that I found as I looked over my previous assignments was that of learning about and understanding my audience...as a communicator, the message **we** present can impact an audience for years to come... As communicators, it is **our** responsibility...”

# Carol as a Writer

“Although it wasn’t intentional, many of my communication classes have focused on writing. I feel my strength lies in my written communication skills, although I know improving in this area is an ongoing journey.”

# Carol as a Writer

## Carol to Samantha:

“... when I started this degree, I felt a bit tentative about writing for different audiences, but now I feel I do a more than adequate job (I don't want to sound too conceited here ... lol). How would you compare your writing skill now with when you first started?”

“I work with many faculty who are not originally from this country and they often seek me out to edit and proofread their memos, reports, etc.”

# Scholar-Professional Identity

Carol to Samantha:

“Samantha, Reviewing these eight steps to resolve conflict was informative. I had to smile to myself a bit when I noted Step 3 - ACTIVE LISTENING!! **Many of us agreed** that one of the most valuable classes ...has been Speech 470: Listening. It seems odd that active listening is not pointed out until Step 3, **don't you agree?**... I do feel, however, that it is necessary to have a step-by-step plan.... **I feel** it's imperative that all supervisors be very knowledgeable in these steps.... **Your thoughts?**”

# Scholar-Professional Identity

## Samantha to Carol:

- “This sounds like a great program.... **Do you find from your research** that this is proving to be successful?”

## Carol to Samantha:

“Samantha - The article that I came across...addresses the issue about technology causing anxiety for its elderly user...Their take on this benefit is that if the patient is happier, more content, they have less [sic] health problems...I for one, however, believe that a person's overall outlook can affect their ability to fight disease and affect their overall well-being. **Do you believe this?**”

# Carol's Facework with Professor

Carol to Professor:

“I feel it’s best to use current sources.”

Samantha to Carol (mild face affront to Prof):

“Choosing to include only recent research is a wise choice. I am sure you could complete two different papers using research from past and present, especially relating to science. Advancements are made every day. There was a day when cigarettes were considered healthy. Could you imagine doing a research paper based on early opinions of cigarettes.”



# Tony

- Mediocre skills as student
- Weak writer
- Achieves success through facework

# Tony's Personal Identity

“First, I am very excited to finally get to this course. I am very open to this community, and I want to know what you all think and what your experiences have been in this field...

I have been an instructor...in the Marine Corps for about 11 years ... Be gone to the days when someone stands in front of you and drones on about the material, and they do not stimulate the classes learning...

I will retire from the Marine Corps...Honestly, I am tired of getting shot at, blown up, and being placed in harms way...”

# Tony's Personal Identity

Tony to Prof:

“Thank you very much. Teaching is my passion. I would not say great, but I do love the crowd; when we stimulate each other. I look forward to learning from you and from the class. Okinawa is beautiful, but I really love the culture and the people. I wish this class was face-to-face though.”

# Tony's Academic Identity

“I am a completely different person than when I started my degree 3 years ago. Communication is what I think about and breathe everyday. You cannot get away from it, unless you live in a whole [sic] somewhere. My teaching skills are better and I feel my students learn more and better from me. I can correspond effectively, I know my relationships have improved because I can feel it. Thanks to all who have touched my studies over the past few years, both the scholarly and those aspiring , like me to be better than what I am now someday.”

# Tony's Scholar-Professional Identity

## Tony to Small Group:

“Classmates, I just wanted to see the general consensus on some questions I have, and I wish to learn about how you all are going about this project. I have learned so much already from everyone.... Again, it is a pleasure to be working with such a great group. Being Communication Studies majors, it is refreshing to see and feel the compassion this class has for the topics. good luck everyone. Sincerely, Tony”

# Tony's Scholar-Professional Identity

- “I wrote a speech for Dr. Jim Sears, a board-certified Pediatrician ... This forum had 500 colleagues in the audience, ... in the audience there are also journalists from influential health magazines... My approach was twofold. I wanted to take a pro stance [on the question: Should pregnant women eat fish?], but I also wanted to identify that there is a problem with Mercury pollution in our world's water supplies. So, my second approach was to stress education on this fact. I addressed some of the con-side of views and rounded out the speech with a call to arms, as physicians reminding us of our code of ethics and what we are here to do for our patients.”

# Tony Reflects

- “...At times I truly felt sub par, ...I received great feed back to assist me in my final project. I gathered all the comments throughout this course and read them time and time again to ensure I was on track with what you all were telling me...I would like to commend the students because I have learned more from you during this class than any other...”

# Tony Reflects

- “... I was not sure how my Cap Stone class would be on line. I still complain to <the university> for not offering this face-to-face here on island. I was wrong. The structure and human interaction was positively there with this class. I enjoyed the communication, I laughed, learned, listened, provided advise, and believe it our not, even shed a tear once. (That's a story for another time.)”



# Word Counts for Tony and Carol

	<b>Carol</b>	<b>Tony</b>
Number discussion postings	139	174
Average length	150 words	200 words
Total words	20,850 words	34,800 words

# Implications

**Thank you!**



Questions?