Performing the Personal Within the Organizational: Communicating Professional Identities Through Taiwanese Commercial Airline Pilots' Personal Narratives

Kai-chun Chuang

University of Denver

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PERFORMING THE PERSONAL WITHIN THE ORGANIZATIONAL: 
COMMUNICATING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES THROUGH 
TAIWANESE COMMERCIAL AIRLINE PILOTS’ PERSONAL NARRATIVES 

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by 
Kai-chun Chuang 
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Advisor: Dr. Bernadette Marie Calafell
Abstract

This dissertation project explored professionalism and the performance of identities by examining Taiwanese commercial airline pilots’ discursive practices in everyday life. The intentions for this project were to not only expand current knowledge of organizational communication from a critical rhetorical perspective, but to further explore the under-appreciated concept of professionalism of organizational members. Theoretically, I traced theoretical analysis in the sociology of professions and further investigated scholarship from identity research in organizational communication studies. This research agenda helped to advance communication-based understandings of the meanings and practices of professional identity as a complement to the sociological conception. I further merged a performance paradigm and critical rhetorical perspective to examine the discursive practices of organizational members and to challenge the bias of traditional textual approaches. Methodologically, I conducted ethnographic interviews with Taiwanese commercial airline pilots in order to understand how they construct their personal, social, and professional identities. Five narrative themes were identified and demonstrated in this project: (1) It takes a lot to become a commercial airline pilot, (2) Being a professional commercial airline pilot is to build up sufficient knowledge, beyond average skill, and correct attitude, (3) Pilots’ resistance and dissent toward company management, (4) Popular (re)presentation influences professionalism, (5) Power and fear
affect professionalism. Pilots’ personal narratives were presented in performative writing and in poetic transcription to make word alive with sounds featuring their meanings. Their personal storytelling created a dialogic space to not only let pilots’ voice to be heard but also revealed how identities are created within and against a larger organizational identity. Overall, this project demonstrated the interdisciplinary examination of the meanings, functions, and consequence of discursive practices in everyday professional life. It also critiqued relationships between power, domination, and resistance while reintroducing the roles of the body and materiality in the domain of professionalism, and provides ethical readings of larger and complex organizational cultures. Applying communication-oriented analysis to study professionalism indeed challenged the long time neglected phenomena regarding the power of the symbolic in sociological approaches and raised the awareness of structural, material, and bodily condition of work.
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# Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1

From Pioneer’s Era to Modernization: The Flying Stories of Pilots ................................. 1

Personal Investment: My Journey to Study Taiwanese Commercial Airline Pilots ........7

Bringing (Organizational) Communication Perspective into Conversations........ 11

An Intersectional Perspective for Studying Commercial Airline Pilots as Professional ................................................................. 17

History of Taiwan Based China Airlines ........................................................................... 21

From early years to modernization ................................................................................. 21

Battling to the loss ............................................................................................................ 23

New start and image ....................................................................................................... 29

Summary .......................................................................................................................... 30

Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework ................................................................................... 32

Tracing Sociology of Professions ....................................................................................... 33

From functionalism to interactionism professions .......................................................... 33

Larson’s professional project .......................................................................................... 36

Abbott’s the system of the professions ......................................................................... 38

Knowledge and professions .......................................................................................... 42

Communicating Professional Identity ............................................................................. 44

Highlights of identity research in organizational communication studies .................. 44

Approaching professional identity through a communication perspective .................. 48

Power, Discourse, and Resistance .................................................................................... 55

Foucault’s genealogical writings .................................................................................... 57

Power, discourse and organizational communication ................................................. 60

Resistance and dominance in organizations ................................................................ 63

Summary .......................................................................................................................... 67

Chapter Three: Methodology and Research Design .............................................................. 69

The Performance Paradigm ............................................................................................... 71

Cultural performance ..................................................................................................... 71

Performativity .................................................................................................................. 73

Dwight Conquergood’s interventions in performance ethnography ............................ 74

Performance and Personal Narratives ............................................................................. 78

The performance turn in personal narratives ............................................................... 78

Politics of personal narrative—Personal narratives against master narrative .................. 80

Performance and Rhetoric ............................................................................................... 82

Critical rhetoric as performance .................................................................................... 82

Performing the personal within the organizational: Challenging the textual bias of rhetoric .......................................................... 86

Research Design, Procedure and Data Analysis Plan ......................................................... 91

Summary .......................................................................................................................... 97
Chapter Four: Performing Pilots’ Professional Identities through Personal Narratives... 99
Meeting with Participants ........................................................................................................ 99
Performing Professional Identities: Pilots’ Narratives .................................................. 105
  It takes a lot to become a commercial airline pilot ...................................................... 105
  Professional is knowledge, skill and attitude ......................................................... 112
  Resistance and dissent ............................................................................................... 122
  Popular (re)presentation and professionalism ......................................................... 132
  Power, fear, and professionalism ........................................................................... 137
Summary .............................................................................................................................. 144

Chapter Five: Conclusion, Challenges, and Future Directions ........................................ 146
Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 148
Research and Ethical Challenge .................................................................................... 155
  Challenges in the fieldworks .................................................................................... 156
  The problem of speaking for others: Their stories/my research .................................... 160
Future Directions ................................................................................................................. 165
Epilogue ............................................................................................................................... 169

References .......................................................................................................................... 172
Appendix A ............................................................................................................................. 188
Appendix B ............................................................................................................................. 190
Appendix C ............................................................................................................................. 192
Chapter One: Introduction

“Mama, I’m going to grow up and be an airline pilot.”
“Make up your mind, son. You know you can’t do both.”
—Robert Grandt, Skygods: The Fall of Pan Am, p. 149

From Pioneer’s Era to Modernization: The Flying Stories of Pilots

It was the milestone for the history of human beings in 1903 as the Wright Brothers conducted the first flight to make a universal human goal become a reality (Launius & Daly Bednarek, 2003). Although the ability to fly in a machine has been considered one of the significant technological developments of the twentieth century, flying was dangerous in reality, and many pioneer pilots were not fortunate in the early aviation era because they had to battle with harsh weather and rudimentary technology (Launicus & Daly Bednarek, 2003). Airmail pilot Dean Smith provides the following account for one of his flying experiences in early the 1920s, “On trip 4 westbound. Flying now. Engine quit. Only place to land on cow. Killed cow. Wrecked plane. Scared me. Smith” (Smith, 1961, pp. 134-135). His story reveals images of courage, self-reliance, and danger, which offer the public a compelling vision of a pilot’s everyday life in the earlier era of the aviation industry (Launicus & Daly Bednarek, 2003).

Civil aviation has been considered among the most significant and fastest-growing areas in the transportation field, and this industry is peculiar because it is difficult for management, especially to airline pilots because they are atypical of the majority of the employees in a company (Harvey, 2007). In fact, commercial airline
pilots “possess substantial industrial power in comparison with other[s]…due to their non-substitutability, the immediate impact of any industrial action on their part, and the extremely tight labor market for pilots with [their] experience” (p. 6). Blain’s (1972) study points out this special condition:

Briefly the two extreme points of view are (a) that an airline pilot is a kind of demi-god, a hero of the air combining the gallantry and resource of a fighter pilot who has won the Victoria Cross with the skill and judgment and navigational ability of the Captain of an Atlantic liner and (b) that he is a glorified bus-driver. The truth, as in all violent argument, lies somewhere between the two extremes (p. 63).

However, more and more commercial airline pilots felt that they were seen as bus drivers, and their statuses have been devalued nowadays because the flight deck of modern airplanes are increasingly automated (Harvey, 2007). As Bennett (2006) describes:

[T]here is a feeling that, with today’s highly automated glass cockpits, pilots are being disempowered and deskilled to the point where they may become a liability… It remains to be seen whether the shift in the ‘balance of power’ between the pilot-craftsman and technologist will have any long-term implications for the profession (p. 64).

Still, commercial airline pilots may be deskilled, but they are the fundamental component of civil aviation (Harvey, 2007). This explains why the stories of flight are fruitful and provide important examples of the manifestation of curiosity, culture, intellectual puzzlement, and social attitudes toward the general and flight operation in particular (Launius & Daly Bednarek, 2003).

From the revelation, romance and risk of early aviation’s pioneering days to the contemporary technological advancement of Jet Age, commercial aviation is constantly evolving, and pilots without a doubt are the heart of commercial aviation (Bennett, 2006). Nowadays, commercial pilots’ flying experience is predominately occupied by
technology with “the air-conditioned, sound-proofed, and ergonomically-correct flight-deck” (p. 10) while the early days of pilots’ experiences were relatively direct and immediate. As Stone and Babcock (1988) point out:

In those early days of aviation there was a direct interaction between the pilot, the builder, and the aircraft engineer. Often the pilot was included from the first day of design concept to the roll-out and initial flight of each aircraft… [P]ioneers in the field of all-weather flying had great influence in the initial design of cockpit instrumentation layout (p. 530).

The quotation above echoes toward what Wolfe (1991) identifies as “the right stuff”; as the qualities of a good test pilot, and the right stuff refers that

a [pilot] should have the ability to go up in a hurtling piece of machinery and put his hide on the line and then have the moxie, the reflexes, the experience, the coolness…and then go up again the next day, and the next day… (p. 24).

Kohn (2005) points out pilots should have the personal qualities of enthusiasm and motivation derived from “a self confident, calm, reliable, disciplined, level-headed and responsible attitude” (p. 27). This definition best suits the idea for what “the right stuff” of pilots should be.

The turbofan or turboprop-powered aircraft in today’s aviation are much more complex than the piston-engined aircraft in 1930s, and the more reliable instruments help pilots navigate the relatively crowded airspace and land at the significantly busier airports around the world (Bennett, 2006). An American pioneer pilot, Robert Buck, who ended his commercial flying career with Boeing 747, explains these experiences in variety of his publications:

[I]n 1931… I was in a Pitcairn Mailwing—an open biplane, 225 horse power, no radio or fancy instrument, only a simple giro instrument called a turn-and-bank indicator, which had a…vertical hand that swung left or right with the airplane’s nose, and a curved carpenter’s level with a steel ball instead of a bubble to show
slip and skid. Airspeed and rate of climb instruments…made up the complement of blind-flying instruments (Buck, 1994, p. 6).

Thinking back, way back, to my Monocoupe days with a map and compass for navigation, then to radio ranges, celestial, Doppler, loran, and INS along with GPS, made me realize I had seen aviation grow from adventure to practicality. I had flown in the days when we worried because of navigation’s inexactness and the early airplane’s lack of long-range fuel supply—a nasty combination (Buck, 2002, p. 430).

Buck’s narrations reflect that flying commercial aircraft in the first half of the Twentieth Century was “a [real] physically demanding” occupation (Bennett, 2006, p. 14). As Hudson and Pettifer (1979) also point out, there is no doubt that pilots had god-like statuses for what they did and who they were throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and this attitude shaped the sense to tell the public what selfless and responsible men pilots were. On the other hand, Buck (2002) argues that pilots of today may have computer skills but may lack of the skills that early flying demanded. As his words explain:

Will the modern pilot need all the skills we learned through the rough-and-tumble early days? Probably not. As automation, reliability, weather information, radar, and instruments as yet unknown are developed to fight weather and failure, most old skills will drift into the haze of the past… As technology improves and grows, though, this will happen less and less. And while I speak in glowing terms of the good old days, I know that those days were far more dangerous than these. We have progressed remarkably… So the outlook is bright for safety, except that the increase in flying will give more chances for problems; the record will be good, but now and then human error will occur, or some mechanical part fail (Buck, 2002, p. 431).

What Buck (2002) tries to say here is that early pioneers might feel scared at times, but were never dull. However, pilots nowadays have a tougher job, harassed and intimidated by regulations, the overpopulation of the skies, and the lack of freedom. While people may consider those pioneers are explorers and heroes, “those who maintain their
concentration and command in today’s conditions are heroic in ways are all too easy to ignore” (p. 430).

When talking about commercial airline pilots, Pan American World Airways (Pan Am) is the name coming up immediately. As a chosen instrument of United States of America, Pan Am was served as its flag carrier, and saw itself as the part of American establishment, especially stylish (Bennett, 2006). A retired captain of Pan Am, Robert Gandt, (1995) provides the following two accounts of self image of Pan Am and its pilots:

[T]here was something besides haircuts and clothes that distinguished them from their contemporaries of the mid-1960s. In their walk, in the way they bantered among themselves, in the appreciative look they cast on the nearby jet airplanes, there was a cockiness. To a man, they walked with a discernible swagger. It was an acquired trait—the body language of the fighter jock, the astronaut, the test pilot (pp. 3-4).

Each [pilots] knew he could have gone to another airline. There was Delta…if you wanted to live in the South. There was Braniff, Texas-based and expanding very fast. American was also Texas-based, with a large domestic system. TWA was a leaner version of Pan Am… But those were domestics, like Greyhound Bus. This was Pan American... For them it would be sushi in Tokyo, petit dejener in Paris, tea in London. Pan Am advertised itself as “the world’s most experienced airline.” Well, sure, thought the new hires. That was the kind of airline they ought to be working for (p. 4).

Through these accounts, Gandt (1995) indicates that Pan Am was the most glamorous airline, not just in the United States, but in the world. His narrations reveal that Pan Am might also be a snobbish airline, as he writes down the possible response from Pan Am about the job application of pilots, “… if you truly believe that you possess the credentials to fly for the world’s most experienced airline, then present yourself to our office at…” (p. 4). Until the 1970s, Pan Am pilots had led a “privileged” existence (Bennett, 2006, p. 26) in their flying life, even in their daily lives, especially when “Pan
Am stewardesses... gorgeous in their bikinis, frolicking around the pool, frolicking with them would be smiling, suntanned, obviously overpaid Pan Am pilots” (Gandt, 1995, p. 5).

While Gandt describes that pilots of Pan Am worked (or lived) in a glamorous way, the lived experience of contemporary pilots may not be like those Pan Am men. Pomerantz (2001) describes the life for a pilot in a regional carrier in the United States:

The crew was coming off a hard weekend of flying: heavy rains, interminable ground delays, surly passengers... the end of a grueling fifteen-hour day that began in one small southern city and ended in another, standing together but feeling alone and waiting for a motel van that was... late... The captain had left his house at six A.M. and seventeen hours later his voice was heavy with fatigue... The crew made it back to the Tri-Cities Airport by seven-thirty the next morning and returned home to Macon in time for Sunday dinner. Now, up and ready on a Monday morning, they had six flights scheduled, with an overnight in Albany, Georgia. More than a living, this was their life (pp. 13-14).

According to Pomerantz (2001), their working life may be hard and those pilots flying for regional carriers are paid less than those flying for US major airlines. However, flying for U.S. major airlines does not guarantee pilots with an easy working load, relatively speaking, as well. Captain Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger, who successfully ditched the US Airways Flight 1549 to Hudson River in New York due to the bird strike and the loss of both engine few minutes after leaving LaGuardia Airport, describes the scheduled pattern before the Hudson Miracle Flight:

I DID not kiss my wife good-bye. It was five-thirty Monday morning, and I was leaving home for a four-day trip. My schedule had me piloting seven US Airways flights, with the last leg set for Thursday, January 15: Flight 1549 from New York to Charlotte... Despite my passion for flying, the constant departures that define a pilot’s life have been very hard on us. Gone from home about eighteen days per month, I have missed well over half of my children’s lives (Sullenberger & Zaslow, 2009, p. 19).
Nowadays, commercial flying does not seem glamorous for pilots anymore, and it may have the potential chance to cause stress and fatigue (Bennett, 2006). As Beaty (1969) indicates, pilots may be conscious that the status is changing. Overall, pilots may still remain as masters in the cockpit, but they probably also lose their personal life as well considering the working environment in contemporary aviation industry.

**Personal Investment: My Journey to Study Taiwanese Commercial Airline Pilots**

I have been intrigued by flying stories since I was a child. My personal investment in civil aviation can be traced back in my early age. According to my parents, I was approximately a one-month-old baby when I had my first airplane ride. I have no memory of my first plane ride, but my mom said that I was surprisingly good on the plane. Later, I would be very excited every Lunar New Year Festival because I would have chance to hop on a 40 minutes flight from Taipei to Kaohsiung, where my maternal grandparents live. I always begged for my parents to make sure that I would get a window seat in order to see the spectacular scene.

My father has traveled internationally since mid-1980s because he works for a mid-sized American corporation. When he comes back from business trips, he always brings souvenirs that he receives on the plane. They are menus, play cards, airplane models, and even mugs. My father also talks about how luxurious it is to fly international business class. The seat is more spacious compared with coach class, and the dining on board is also amazing. My father shares, “It is definitely a whole different experience compared with the short domestic flight in Taiwan.” Meanwhile, I had the privilege to travel internationally as an elementary school student back in the early 1990s. I finally experienced the wider seat and the great food. I received the toy packages for kids on
board, the wing badge, and playing cards. These flying experiences granted me an eye opening experience and pleasure. In addition to these flying experiences, my attention also switched to the frontline employees of airlines. As a passenger, we may encounter reservation agents, check-in agents, gate agents, and customer service representatives on the ground while interacting with flight attendants on the air. Where are pilots? We see pilots walking at the airport. We also hear pilots reporting the flying information to passenger through the in-flight announcement system. Nevertheless, we do not see what pilots do inside the flight deck. We know that they are responsible for operating the airplane, but the question is arises, “What do those commercial airline pilots really do behind the flight deck door on the plane?”

Civil air transportation grew fast in the late 1980s in Taiwan. China Airlines (CAL), representing the flagship carrier of Taiwan, was the only air carrier, operating schedules of international passenger flights before 1991. New models of planes had been purchased to extend the flying network to more cities around the world. Unfortunately, eight major accidents causing huge fatalities were attributed to pilots’ errors. Traditionally, CAL acquired ex-military pilots from Republic of China (ROC) Air Force, but the earlier management, also coming from military, did not establish the standard operation procedure to manage pilots. Therefore, the “military” style of management inside CAL was also blamed by public because civil aviation should focus on reliability

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1 EVA AIR, established by Evergreen Group in Taiwan in 1991, enters into the international schedule passenger service in 1991 and has been a strong competitor to China Airlines.

2 Detailed descriptions of CAL major accidents between 1980 and 2000 are provided later in this chapter.
and safety rather than simply achieving duty. After two major accidents in 1990s,\(^3\) CAL management started re-evaluating and re-training its pilots and also fired those “unfit” pilots through regular proficiency checks in the early 2000s. Most of them were ex-military officers. In the mean time, CAL started the sponsored cadet program and nurtured the next generation pilots for the backbone of CAL. Nowadays, the safety records of CAL have improved a lot without a doubt, and local (Taiwanese) pilots are not considered troublemakers anymore. The successful cadet program also encourages many people to join the world of flying. Commercial airline pilot turns out to be a hot spot and a dream job in Taiwan.

While CAL takes every step to ensure pilots receive enough training and follow every standard procedure, some of its pilots may not necessarily agree with management.

In one Taiwanese commercial airline pilot’s personal weblog, he expresses one of his concerns toward company management invading pilot’s “professional” field:

> Pilots of China Airlines have taken on so much original sin from the past. Many of us silent our voices while other departments invade and disrespect our professionalism. Managements always say that airplane crash cannot happen again in China Airlines, but they only worry about operational achievement and their own managerial positions. Being a pilot, we should consider that there are hundreds of souls and thousands of families relying on us. Please do not accept any policies compromising flight operation safety, spend five minutes to file a report, and tell managements what stupid decisions have been made by them (A Man Wandering above Cloud, April 23, 2008).

Other pilots raise the same concern, but also point out other structural problems, such as different salary structures and training requirements between local and foreign pilots.

Although local Taiwanese pilots may not be the troublemakers anymore, they are still

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\(^3\) In 1994, CAL Flight 140 crashed at Nagoya Airport, Japan. 264 of 271 occupants on board were dead. In 1998, CAL Flight 676 crashed close to Taipei CKS Airport, Taiwan. 196 occupants on board and 7 people on the ground were dead. Pilot’s error was determined to attribute to these two accidents.
internally being treated differently compared with foreign pilots by company management.

My personal interest in the civil aviation industry in Taiwan, especially the professional life of commercial airline pilots, leads me to generate this research question, “How do Taiwanese commercial airline pilots construct their professional identity?” Because the notorious safety records of CAL give public an impression that Taiwanese commercial airline pilots’ flying skills are questionable and not reliable, CAL management needs to implement the strict training and evaluating program toward pilots. Although CAL’s pilots understand that the reform of flight operation is needed and necessary, they feel disrespected by management for not hearing their professional suggestions in making decisions. These decisions may also potentially harm the flight operation. Meanwhile, the public still has the impression and stereotype that commercial airline pilots can travel around the world, have relatively higher paychecks than other jobs, and live in a lifestyle with luxury houses, cars, and pretty women. Although it might be true in terms of the material life in the past, most commercial airline pilots nowadays need to deal with tight flying schedules, strict bi-annual proficiency checks, and health examinations. As one of my pilot’s friends tells me, “I am just a bus driver. A bus having a pair of wings flies in the sky.” In order to address issues I discussed above, this dissertation project specifically asks the following two questions: How do Taiwanese commercial airline pilots respond to public perception of their occupation? And, how do Taiwanese commercial airline pilots challenge company administration about management issues of their occupation? These two questions help illuminate the question of how these pilots construct their professional identities. In the next section of this
chapter, I rationalize why it matters to study Taiwanese commercial airline pilots’ professional identity through a communication perspective. Specifically, this dissertation project traces the sociological origins of professions and reengages organizational communication perspective to discuss why the linkage of self to organization is formative and powerful (Cheney, 2005). Moreover, revealing a final truth about organizational communication is not the goal of this dissertation project. Rather, I, as a researcher, intend to “collaborate” with those commercial airline pilots and “incorporate” their voices (Taylor, 2005, p. 130) through their personal narratives. Therefore, this project expects to demonstrate the plurality of organizational sense-making through recalling “multi-faceted qualities of organizational experiences” (Taylor, 2005, p. 130) through commercial airline pilots’ storytelling. Hence, those stories, as discourses, serve the function to link individual persuasive choices with organizational resources and produce or reinforce particular effects or identities (Cheney, 2005; Taylor, 2005). Next, I begin with a more thorough discussion to justify why a communication perspective is needed in the scholarly conversation to study professional identity.

**Bringing (Organizational) Communication Perspective into Conversations**

The early stage of organizational communication studies were developed and dominated through four research traditions, which are communication channels, communication climate, network analysis, and superior-subordinate communication (Putnam & Cheney, 1985). However, scholars start challenging the study of organizational communication because it was predominately focused on the rational model, positivism, and management bias (Tomkins, 1984). Therefore, some scholars proposed that the study of organizational communication needs to distance from the
preoccupations of management and bring the critical perspective into the conversation because it focuses on the subjectivities of organizational members’ lived experience and their own consciousness-raising (Redding 1985; Redding & Tompkins 1988). In other words, a critical perspective is an approach to critique and change organizational practices from oppressive to empowering sites (Tompkins & Wanca-Thibault, 2001) while favoring “a dialectic of opposing rationalities” from organizational members (Redding & Tompkins, 1988, p. 25).

Mumby and Stohl (1996) later provide a more thorough discussion of disciplining organizational communication studies. They identify four central problematics to research organizational communication. First, the different voices contest the monolithic managerial voice dominating other areas of organizational studies and concern with “organizations as social collectives that pose particularly complex communication issues” (Mumby & Stohl, 1996, p. 56). Therefore, research should provide insights from the practices of workers to enable and constrain the possibilities for collective behavior of modern organizational life. Second, organizational communication studies intersect between the tension of technical/instrumental and practical modes of rationality, providing a fruitful understandings of effectiveness. Because of organizational members’ interests, experiences, culture, and individual perspectives influencing organizational positions, effectiveness should be considered as a complex individual and collective sense making rather than a monolithic concept of managerial efficiency (Mumby & Stohl, 1996). Therefore, the managerial view to maximize gains and minimize concessions as negotiation is challenged by organizational scholars (Mumby & Stohl, 1996; also see Folger, 1994; Putnam, 1994). Thus, negotiation in organizations should be
seen as “a perceptual change in the elements of the problem” and “a transformative power [to] transcend notions of technical and instrumental rationality” (Mumby & Stohl, 1996, p. 62). Third, because the management perspective treats organizational culture as a monolithic and unitary structure, Mumby and Stohl (1996) argue that “a lack of appreciation of the vast array of communicative and culture practices [including different] organizational life” (p. 63) should be addressed. In order to lead organizational communication studies to the “ongoing product of communication practices” and “the physical confines of the organizational site” (p. 64), Mumby and Stohl suggest that organizational communication studies should concentrate on the complex connections among organizing, culture, and social processes. Finally, Mumby and Stohl (1996) point out that most studies traditionally assume organizations are embedded in cultural and societal context, but organizations are still treated as separated from society. Therefore, they propose that society, culture, organizations, intertwine with communication together because “the essence of organizing [and other social context] insofar as organizational structure is constituted and reconstituted through communication” (p. 66).

These four problematics invite us to challenge traditional organizational communication studies and invent additional frames for critique (Taylor, Flanagan, Cheney, & Seibold, 2001). Through discussing the four problematic, the role of communication shifts from secondary to privileged in organizational life, and communication should be seen as a major element in the process of organizing. Organizational communication studies should be recognized as a body of knowledge while having conversation with other disciplines because “the [postmodern] sense of fragmentation and plurality associated with the multiplicity of voices, divergences of
meaning, and unstable boundaries” (Mumby & Stohl, 1996, p. 68) will make this field more dynamic and productive.

Echoing these four problematics of organizational communication studies, applying multiple perspectives to study the complexity of discursive practices in organizations seems much needed (Deetz, 2001). Organizations maintain a system of communication, communicate a common purpose, and secure the essential contribution of member (Cheney & McMillan, 1990), and organizations also help their members perform identification through their numerous means of communication by communicating their values, goals, and decisions in the form of guidelines for both individual and collective actions (Cheney, 1983). Therefore, the study of organizational communication is to not only target on two phenomena, organizations and communication (Pacanowsky & Trujillo, 1983), but also “focus on messages created within or on behalf of organizations, seeking to create identifications, solicit cooperation, and persuade” (Meisenbach & McMillan, 2006, p. 102). Because communication is treated as “language use” (Pacanowsky & Trujillo, 1983, p. 127) from anthropological perspective, communication should be understood as the notion of communicative performance, which is a process and culture of social construction and reconstruction. In order to understand organizational culture, communication in organizations should be treated as “culture performance” (p. 129) because it brings the meaning of structural form, such as symbol, story, metaphor, ideology, or saga to completion or accomplishing. Performance is an action that organizational members constitute and reveal their culture to self and others. It is dialogically interactional and contextual, embodied in the reality and history organizational members bring to completion. Therefore, one way to
understand an individual’s performance of their world through communicative behaviors is to study their story (Putnam, 1983; Kelly, 1985).

Organizational members’ storytelling provides information to understand their ways of behaving in the organization (Kelly, 1985). Theoretically, their storytelling reveals the information about the rules of organization, reflects the values and beliefs, focuses on power structure, reinforces traditions and customs, and provides an on-going history of the organization (Kelly, 1985). Therefore, “stories provide the decorative container of a narrativity for everyday practice” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 78), and “portend the future by detailing the past” (Kelly, 1985, p. 47). Methodologically speaking, storytelling in the form of personal narrative performance is a way of speaking by a storyteller to an audience in a social situation through a word and a performance (Langellier, 1989). Shifting from text to performance, performance itself is reconceptualized as a true mode of communication with ramifications in a social or cultural situation, and performance is an “integrated approach to narrative [which] overcomes the bifurcation of text and context resulting from more traditional approaches to narratives” (Langellier, 1989, p. 250). Therefore, storytelling is an act of performance because it highlights certain experiences which are worthy of emulation (when the story glorifies success) or deserving of caution (when the story accentuates failure) (Pacanowsky & Trujillo, 1983). Storytelling is not just representing a pre-existing reality (Mumby, 1987) because storytellers perform their personal narratives presenting their identities, experiences, and articulating sites of struggle (Langellier, 1999).

Moreover, a performance paradigm should stand alongside a textual paradigm (Conquergood, 1992) because the act of performance sees critique as practice rather than
method (McKerrow, 1989). As McGee (1990) has mentioned, “rhetoric is what rhetorician do” (p. 297). McKerrow (1993, p. 61) argues the “doing” is that researcher resituates the body to presence in critiquing social practice. This embodied practice helps researcher make sense of discourses which not only build up from experiences but also explain influences and meanings to human beings (McGee, 1990; McKerrow, 1991). Therefore, a researcher invents texts suitable for criticism and represents texts from a collection of fragmentation (McGee, 1990; McKerrow, 1993), and the goal of the invented text is to “pull together those fragments whose intersection in real lives has meaning for social actor” rather than “to produce a master text” for all known and possible condition (McKerrow, 1993, p. 62). Eventually, McKerrow (1993) argues that the body of the researcher, as an embodied subject, joins in the creation of meaning, and the interpretation about the role of discourse in the construction and deconstruction of social practice is from researcher’s performance of critique.

Taken together, performance and critical rhetoric perspectives provide a conceptual framework both theoretically and methodologically to discuss the possible trend for studying professional identity in organizational communication. Sociologists have discussed the rise and roles of professionalism in contemporary society, particular focusing on chronicling changes in the structure and practice of work, while organizational communication as a field of studies is lacking a discussion of symbolic functions of the professional, especially relating to the material conditions and expressions of contemporary everyday life (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Therefore, engaging the trace of meanings, functions, and consequences of professional discourse will help to challenge human beings’ unreflective everyday practice, and “the discursive
turn” will reintroduce the roles of the body and material life in the domain of professionalism (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007, p. 148).

Diverse sites of performance emerge in not only the usual professional workplace but also work sites not typically called professional when organizational members also perform their professional conduct (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Therefore, exploring the dynamics of intersectionality at work sites through larger professional discourses provides a powerful interpretation for consequential meanings and functions of the professional materially and politically (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Meanwhile, Ashcraft (2007) suggests that discourses always function to organize professional identities and reproduce the division and hierarchy of labor. Nevertheless, this dissertation takes on this suggestion and considers focusing on how professional groups construct and secure their own interests in the discursive process, and how dominant cultural and institutional codes of professional behaviors are reflected in multiple discourse formations, such as resistance of professional norms (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Next, I turn to existing studies on commercial airline pilots from both sociology and communication fields to explain how this dissertation study can bridge the terrain.

An Intersectional Perspective for Studying Commercial Airline Pilots as Professional

Bennett’s (2006) *A Sociology of Commercial Flight Crew* provides a detailed context of civil aviation history and an in-depth ethnographic account of commercial airline pilots’ social, economic, and political experiences. In his work, Bennett argues that commercial aviation has benefited from different fields, such as psychology, ergonomics, management, and other academicians, but sociologists’ input has been more
or less by-passed. This book contains lots of primary data and comments, but summaries of different chapters are provided for readers to make this research as accessible as possible (Bennett, 2006). In this section, I provide the summaries drawing from Bennett’s research and bring what very few organizational communication scholars have been done in this area to draw the potential integrating issues from both fields.

In Bennett’s (2006) ethnographic research, some pilots comment that commercial flying is a job or a vocation. Flying may not be considered an intellectual activity while it requires “skill and ability” to control the airplane safely (p. 73). Therefore, commercial flying as an occupation may not be devoid of romance, but Bennett argues that his findings from the perspective of socio-economic motivation reflect what Gant (2003) suggests, that pilots love using their talents and being respected for what they do as well. On the other hand, this not so romantic occupation reflects that almost all commercial airline pilots work in “a risk-laden environment” because fatigue and stress may affect not only job performance but the ability to have a happy personal life as well (Bennett, 2006, p. 85). Even if pilots have financial compensation that affords a reasonable lifestyle, the question that remains is how pilots can create time and space to manage their personal life in regard to the material rewards (Bennett, 2006).

Instead of socio-economical status, commercial airline pilots also believe that their job had changed “in essence” even if they try to think about their occupation in a positive way (Bennett, 2006). In Bennett’s research, he addresses that some pilots consider themselves “unionized train drivers,” “computer-operators,” or “just another worker” (p. 92). Some reasons contributing to these responses is that the intercession of computers has trumped the importance of airmanship, and commercial flying has become
more bureaucratic (Bennett, 2006). It is interesting to see the respondents in Bennett’s research point out the diminished ability of airmanship while the possible human capital may also impact flying safety margins, and managements are constantly criticized for being remote and uncaring. As Bennett (2006) explains:

[I]t is a surprising development in an industry whose front-line workers (pilots) are such capable problem-solvers. Given that they take so long to train, cost so much to employ, spend so much time at the “coal face” and are able to solve difficult problems under pressure, why not tap…pilots’ problem-solving skills, familiarity with the “lived reality” of flying and accumulated wisdom? (p. 112)

Overall, Bennett (2006) concludes that the sociology of commercial airline pilots is complex. From internal pressure, such as much more cut-throat competition from both traditional and low-cost carriers, to external threats like new plague-type disease and terrorism, Bennett (2006) indicates the potential squeeze of the industry may happen in the future. While there are multiple dimensions of pilots’ working and personal life, “there is [for sure] no simple [and] convenient pilot-stereotype” (p. 119).

Bennett’s effort to draw a bigger picture to discuss the sociology of commercial airplane pilots creates a space for communication field waves into the intersectional scholarly conversation. He conducts ethnographic observation and interviews, creating arguments from pilots’ accounts. These insightful accounts from commercial pilots in Bennett’s research present “a complex form of resistance to occupational diversification” while “beneficiaries of professional privilege struggle with the emotional experience of declining control” (Ashcraft, 2005, p. 85). These contested meanings of commercial airline pilots’ labor, body, and identity are not just selves, but is “a discursive struggle for the right to occupational control, professional class status, and the [socio-economic] standing of a job” (p. 85). While commercial airline pilots’ workplace is “multiple,
dispersed, shifting and mobile,” they still share a strong sense of identity and culture within organizations and across the occupation even if they may not need to interact with management (Ashcraft, 2007, p. 28). Therefore, “bringing work back in” should be the main focus on studies of the professions through communication approach (p. 28).

Overall, this project is designed to investigate how organizational members perform professional identities in mundane life. Theoretically, bringing a performance paradigm and critical rhetoric perspective together to discuss professionalism and the performance of identities is a valid point to examine the discursive practice of organizational members. An interdisciplinary examination of the discursive practice of professionalism is suggested by scholars because organizational sites are usually complicated. On the other hand, reading professional bodies and practices from critical lenses to critique power, domination, and resistance justifies political characters and provides ethical readings of organizational cultures. Methodologically, this study will consist of ethnographic interviews which will help understand how commercial airline pilots interpret and construct their personal, social, and professional identities. The interviewees’ personal storytelling can create a dialogical space for letting voices be heard and invent a possible space for making conversations about how identities are created within and against a larger organizational identity. Through my reflections as a researcher, my co-performative witnessing will reveal what Others do inside the politics of their location, constraints, and inside the materiality of struggles and the consequences (Madison, 2007). Therefore, a greater level of reflexivity in researching the professional lives of organizational members may be achieved because as a researcher, I am “there and with as a political act in the excavation of subjugated knowledge and belongings for
the creation of alternative futures” (Madison, 2007, p. 829). While every space has its own reading, critique, and inquiry, “[bodies are performed] in struggle to belong with and for each other across [the] forms of corporal suffering, geographic conflict, and discursive power” (p. 830). In this case, this study can potentially make contributions, from expanding current knowledge of organizational communication from a critical rhetorical perspective to exploring the under-appreciated concept of professionalism of organizational members through different methodological choices, such as ethnographic interviewing and the performance paradigm rather than traditional textual approach. In the next section, I provide a detailed description of history of Taiwan based China Airlines, paying closely attention to those accidents attributed to pilot error as the important background information shaping this study. The reason to focus on the history of Taiwan based China Airlines is because this airline was the official flag carrier of Taiwan and was the only airline providing both international and domestic service in between 1966 and 1991. Therefore, understanding the history of China Airlines is also an important step to approach the background and history of commercial airline pilots in Taiwan.

**History of Taiwan Based China Airlines**

**From early years to modernization.** Founded by retired officers of Republic of China (ROC) Air Force in December 1959, China Airlines (CAL) would eventually become the flagship carrier with backing from the ROC government in Taiwan (Hough & Wang, 2006). It was started with $14,000 USD in capital and 26 employees. A pair of Consolidated PBY Catalinas flew military charters and shipments to the contested islands of Kinmen and Matsu in the Taiwan Straits (Hough & Wang, 2006). From 1961, CAL
started flying relief missions, supported the United States military service, and provided
civilian service in war-torn Indochina, such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Operating
those flights in Indochina helped CAL generate enough money and experiences to move
into operating scheduled passenger flights within Taiwan.

In 1962, CAL began its first domestic passenger flight between Taipei and
Hualien. Domestic flight service later extended to other major cities in Taiwan by using
Douglas DC-3s, DC-4s, and Curtiss C-46 Commandos (Hough & Wang, 2006).
International flights in Taiwan used to be operated by Civil Air Transportation (CAT),
founded by Claire L. Chennault and Whiting Willauer in 1948, with backing from the
USA (Hough & Wang, 2006). When CAT suspended operation in the later 1960s, CAL
was well positioned to take over the international markets. In 1966, CAL used Lockheed
1049H Super Constellation for its inaugural international flight from Taipei to Saigon,
South Vietnam. In the following year, CAL received Boeing 727 jets and facilitated new
flights to regional cities in both South and North East Asia. CAL current flying network
of East Asia can be traced back to late 1960s. Since CAT ceased business in May 1968,
CAL officially became the flagship carrier, represented the Republic of China in Taiwan
(Hough & Wang, 2006).

The 1970s were marked as the significant era for the expanding of CAL. In
February 1970, the first intercontinental flight, operated by Boeing 707, was inaugurated
between Taipei and San Francisco with a stop in Tokyo. The transpacific network later
extended to Los Angeles and Hawaii passenger flights as well as freighter service. Later
in 1977, CAL introduced Boeing 747SPs to its fleet and began the nonstop service
between Taipei and the U.S. West Coast.
However, international political realities also prevented CAL from fully realizing its growth potential (Hough & Wang, 2006). By 1971, the international favor was beginning to shift towards Beijing government rather than Taipei. After Beijing took over Taipei’s seat at the United Nations (UN), CAL lost some of its East Asia routes authorities as well although CAL retained some of its flights later eventually. From early 1980s to mid 1990s, CAL started with more extended Transpacific and Europe networks in both passenger and cargo flights. Despite the ongoing awkward political situation, CAL was becoming a global presence (Hough & Wang, 2006). New modern types of equipments, such as Airbus 300s, McDonnell Douglas MD-11s, and Boeing 747-400s had also been brought to CAL’s fleet.

In addition to the significant growth of business, it was also the painful time for CAL from 1980 to 2000. The company suffered eight well-publicized accidents attributed to pilots’ errors, resulting to the concerns and doubts from publics and the urgent need for reforming flight operation culture and safety. Out of these eight accidents, seven separate planes were beyond repair and written off, and six accidents involved fatalities. In the next section, I provide descriptions of these specific eight accidents. However, the authorities, especially in Taiwan, did not release final investigation reports of some accidents that happened between 1980 and 1990. Therefore, descriptions of some accidents are not complete and are only adopted from news articles or internet database.

**Battling to the loss.**

**Manila Accident, February 27, 1980.** CAL Flight 811 was an international scheduled passenger flight between Taipei, Taiwan and Manila, Philippines. The Boeing 707 undershot the runway on landing and caught fire at Manila Airport, and two of 135
occupants were dead. Both the Philippines and Taiwan did not release the final investigation report. However, there were indications that a pilot’s error contributed to this accident (Flight 811 Accident description, The Aviation Safety Network).

**Flight 006 Accident, February 19, 1985.** CAL flight 006, the Boeing 747SP, was an international scheduled passenger flight from Taipei to Los Angeles. The flight was flying about 300 miles northwest of San Francisco uneventfully at about 41,000 feet mean sea level when the No. 4 engine lost power. During the attempt to recover and restore normal power on the No. 4 engine, the airplane rolled to the right, nosed over, and entered an uncontrollable descent. The captain was unable to restore the airplane to stable flight until it had descended to 9,500 feet. After the captain stabilized the airplane, he elected to divert to San Francisco International Airport, where a safe landing was made. Although the airplane suffered major structural damage during the upset, descent, and subsequent recovery, only two persons among the 274 passengers and crew on board were injured seriously (Flight 006 Accident description, The Aviation Safety Network).

According to National Transportation Safety Board, USA final investigation report (1986, NTSB/AAR-86/03),

the probable cause of this accident was the captain’s preoccupation with an inflight malfunction and his failure to monitor properly the airplane’s flight instruments which resulted in his losing control of the airplane. Contributing to the accident was the captain’s over-reliance on the autopilot after the loss of thrust on the no. 4 engine (p. 34).

**Makung Accident, February 16, 1986.** The Boeing 737 departed Taipei at 18:09 for an additional domestic scheduled passenger flight to Makung, Penghu Islands, Taiwan. During the first attempt to land, a nose-gear tire had reportedly burst due to bounce landing. There were parts of the airplane found on the runway as well. Flight
crew initiated the go-around procedure, but the aircraft crashed into the sea later. Part of the wreckage was found on March 10 under 190 feet of water, 12 miles North of Makung. The authorities did not release the final investigation report of this accident. Therefore, the probable cause was not determined by officials though it pointed to pilot’s error (B-1870 Accident description, The Aviation Safety Network).

**Hualien Accident, October 26, 1989.** CAL Flight 204 was a domestic scheduled passenger flight from Hualien to Taipei. The Boeing 737 collided with a mountain at an elevation of 7000 feet, 3 minutes after departing from Hualien Airport in the early evening at October 26, 1989. 54 passengers and crew members were dead. The Civil Aeronautics Administration of Taiwan determined the probable cause as the flight crew used the standard departure procedure of the wrong runway, causing the aircraft to make a left turn instead of right turn after take-off (Flight 204 Accident description, The Aviation Safety Network).

**Flight 605 Hong Kong Accident, November 5, 1993.** CAL Flight 605 was an internationally scheduled passenger flight from Taipei to Hong Kong. The five month old Boeing 747-400, carrying 396 occupants, overshot the runway into Kowloon Bay while landing at the old Hong Kong Kai Tak Airport during tropical storm weather. There was not a single fatality in this accident. According to the final investigation report released by Civil Aviation Department, Hong Kong, flight crew mistakenly pushed throttle after touching down and late deployed thrust reversers and the aircraft could not be stopped on the runway. The investigation report also indicated that the captain of this flight was a senior pilot in both military and civil aviation and instructor pilot of Boeing 747-400 while the co-pilot just finished the training. Therefore, the co-pilot did not (want to)
challenge the captain’s decision to continue to land when the plane encountered wind shear on a short final course (Flight 605 Accident description, The Aviation Safety Network).

**Flight 140 Nagoya Accident, April 26, 1994.** CAL Flight 140 was an internationally scheduled passenger flight from Taipei to Nagoya, Japan, operated by Airbus 300-600R. According to the final investigation report released by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Commission (AAIC), Japan, the first officer of this flight was the Pilot Flying (PF) and started the Runway 34 ILS (Instrument Landing System) approach with auto throttles engaged. At the altitude of 1070 feet, the first officer inadvertently selected TOGA (Take-off/Go Around) mode. Unknowingly of the TOGA selection, both captain and first officer tried to override the flight director's throttle and pitch control movements. In order to remain on the glide slope, the first officer disengaged the auto throttle and reduced thrust manually. At the attitude of 1030 feet, the flight crew hoped that the autopilots would get them on the glide slope, and engaged them again. The autopilot immediately entered the go-around mode because TOGA had been selected 12 seconds earlier. To get back on the glide slope, the flight crew applied down elevator. This caused the flight director guidance system to select pitch-up stabilizer. Forty-two seconds after TOGA selection, the autopilots were disengaged again, but the aircraft kept climbing. Eight seconds afterwards, the alpha floor was activated due to an excessive angle-of-attack and triggered maximum thrust, which increased the nose-up attitude to 52.6 degrees. The captain disengaged alpha-floor by retarding engine thrust, and the speed had dropped to 78 knots by then, causing the airplane to enter a stall at 1800 feet. The aircraft hit the ground tail-first 300 feet right of the runway and burst into flames.
Japan AAIC determined the probable cause in the final investigation report. While the aircraft was making an ILS approach to runway 34 of Nagoya Airport, under manual control by the first officer, the first officer inadvertently activated the GO lever, which changed the flight director (FD) to go-around mode and caused a thrust increase. This process made the aircraft deviate above its normal glide path. The autopilots were subsequently engaged, with go-around mode still engaged. Under these conditions the first officer continued pushing the control wheel in accordance with the captain’s instructions. As a result of this, the horizontal stabilizer moved to its full nose-up position and caused an abnormal out-of-trim situation. The flight crew continued approach, unaware of the abnormal situation. The increased of the alpha floor function was activated and the pitch angle of airplane increased. It is considered that, at this time, the captain, who had now taken the controls, judged that landing would be difficult and opted for go-around. The aircraft began to climb steeply with a high pitch angle attitude. The captain and the first officer did not carry out an effective recovery operation, and the aircraft stalled and crashed. The fatalities of this accident were 264 out of 271 occupants on board, marked as the third worst accident involving an Airbus 300, and the second worst accident happened in Japan currently (Flight 140 Accident description, The Aviation Safety Network).

**Flight 676 Taoyuan Accident, February 16, 1998.** CAL Flight 676 was an internationally scheduled passenger flight from Bali-Denparsa, Indonesia to Taipei, operated by Airbus 300-600R. The flight crew carried out the ILS runway 05L approach to Taipei in light rain and fog. According to the final investigation report released by the Civil Aeronautics Administration, Taiwan, the airplane came in 1000 feet higher on the
glide slope. The flight crew initiated the go-around procedure, and the go-around power was applied 19 seconds later over the runway 05L threshold. The landing gear was raised and the flaps set to 20 degrees as the aircraft climbed through 1723 feet in a 35 degrees pitch-up. Reaching 2751 feet with 42.7 deg pitch-up and 45 knots speed, the aircraft started stalling. The flight crew could not regain control as the aircraft struck the ground 200 feet left off the runway 05L and hit a utility pole and a highway median. The aircraft then skidded into several houses, surrounded by fish farms, rice paddies, warehouses of factories, and exploded. All 196 occupants, including the chief of Central Bank in Taiwan, on board and seven people on the ground are dead.

The probable cause was that the aircraft was higher than the normal path during all the descent and the approach. In the meantime, the captain was relatively senior in both military and civil level while the first officer just finished the training. Therefore, the crew coordination between the captain and the first officer was inadequate. In 12 seconds, the flight crew did not counteract the pitch up tendency due to the thrust increase after go around, and the reaction of the crew was not sufficient as a consequence the pitch up increased until the aircraft stalled (Flight 676 Accident description, The Aviation Safety Network).

**Flight 642 Hong Kong Accident, August 22, 1999.** CAL Flight 642 was an internationally scheduled passenger flight between Bangkok, Thailand and Taipei via Hong Kong, operated by MD-11. Weather in the Hong Kong area was very poor with a severe tropical storm “Sam” 50 kilometer north east of the airport, gale force winds, and thunderstorms. The aircraft landed hard on its right main gear and the engine number three hit the runway. The right main gear collapsed, and the right wing separated from
airplane. The airplane rolled inverted as it skidded off the runway in flames. It came to rest on a grassy area next to the runway, 1100 meter from the runway 25R threshold. There were three fatalities among the 315 occupants on board in this accident.

The Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department conducted the investigation and determined the probable cause of the accident was the captain’s inability to arrest the high rate of descent existing at 50 feet Radio Altitude. The captain also failed to appreciate the combination of reducing airspeed, increasing the rate of descent, and the thrust decreasing to flight idle, which caused him fail to apply power to counteract the high rate of descent prior to touchdown. (Flight 642 Accident description, The Aviation Safety Network)

**New start and image.** The eight major accidents between 1980 and 2000 described above were primarily attributed to pilots’ error and caused not only the loss of lives but also the loss of public image and confidence for CAL (Hough & Wang, 2006), especially the stereotype of some ex-military pilots. Therefore, CAL management realized that a change of flight operation culture was needed, and they underwent a major revamp of the pilot training program (Hough & Wang, 2006). After the Flight 676 Taoyuan Accident in 1998, CAL re-evaluated and retrained its pilots with intent to make retired military officers better team players through the help from European Lufthansa. CAL created its own cadet program to recruit new pilots in early 90s, hired some experienced foreign pilots to help instruct Taiwanese local pilots, and revised the standard operational procedures for flight operations. These efforts to reconstruct flight operation culture and professional pilots are considered being repaid because CAL passed the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA), an internationally recognized safety
evaluation program for global safety management in the past few years since 2005 (Hough & Wang, 2006). In fact, compliance with the IOSA standards and recommended practices help CAL to achieve operational safety, and more than 100 airlines around the world have certified (Hough & Wang, 2006).

From its humble beginnings, through political roadblocks, and the painful struggling in 1990s, CAL currently operates 49 passenger jets and 19 freighters with 98 destinations in 29 countries around the world. Although CAL faces competition from another Taiwanese carriers from early 1990s, with more direct cross-strait flights between Taiwan and China, high-demanding cargo service, a modern fleet, and a relatively improved safety record, CAL has come a really long way since the first PBY charter flights over 50 years ago (Hough & Wang, 2006).

**Summary**

In this chapter, I offer the glimpse of aviation history, specifically focus on the flying stories from pilots’ life. I share my investment of aviation in this study through my personal story. More specifically, I briefly rationalize the importance of bringing an organizational communication perspective into scholarly conversation, and I provided an overview of the potential theoretical and methodological contributions of this study. I also turned my focus to the existing studies in both sociology and communication fields of commercial airline pilots to justify an intersectional perspective for studying commercial airlines pilots as professional. The question remains, “How can an organizational communication approach contribute to the scholarly conversation basing on the foundation built up by sociology field?” In the meantime, it is important to have a

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4 EVA AIR received the operation permission from Taiwanese government in 1991 and started international scheduled service in the same year.
thorough history background of Taiwan based China Airlines because their pilots have been represented as Taiwanese commercial airlines pilots equally by public for a long time. The descriptions of CAL’s infamous safety records also occupy the space in this chapter. The point here is not to reveal how awful this air carrier is. Those accidents might be an embarrassing, even humiliating, past for CAL and their pilots. However, this history not only plays an important role on CAL’s flight operation reform, but also stimulates contemporary pilots to reconsider their “job” and/or “profession.” In the next chapter of this dissertation, I present the relevant topics of literature from both sociology and communication perspective to provide a conceptual framework for studying Taiwanese commercial airline pilots’ professional identity.
Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework

As a vocabulary term of English, professional has a wide range of uses in everyday life, and many of these uses are value-laden (Macdonald, 1995), but it also seems to be a “taken-for-granted” term in both popular and academic context in contemporary society (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007, p. 146). What counts toward professional in our everyday life? Do we overuse the term “professional” to evaluate people’s careers? What do we mean that someone should act like a professional (Cheney, Lair, Ritz, & Kendall, 2010)? Sociological scholars have had wide-ranging discussions about the rise of professionalism in modern society, particularly focusing on chronicling changes in the structure and practice of work (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007; cf. Abbott, 1988; Larson, 1977; Macdonald, 1995). Some scholars also engage the debate to determine whether or not the sociology of professions is dead or alive and what perspectives can be applied in academic research of the professions (Hall, 1983; Macdonald & Ritzer, 1988). In addition to the sociological perspective, communication scholars pay attention to the lack of discussion of symbolic functions of professional and call for investigating the trace of meanings, functions, and consequences into professional discourse to challenge the unreflective daily practice (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). In order to situate research agendas from both communication and sociology disciplines in this dissertation project, the first part of this chapter traces theoretical analysis in the sociology of professions, focusing on key sociologists’ works, such as Larson (1977),
Abbott (1988), and Macdonald’s (1995). I further demonstrate the key issues of the construction of identity scholarship in organizational communication studies (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008) and argue for the advancement of communication-based understandings of the meanings and practices of professional identity as a complement to the sociological conception (cf. Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007; Cheney, Lair, Ritz, & Kendall, 2010). Second, I trace the body of literature from Foucault’s works (1977a, 1977b, 1977c, 1980a, 1980b, 1983) and scholars (Mumby, 1987, 1988, 2004; Mumby & Stohl, 1991) adopting Foucault’s concepts to argue that organizational discourses are viewed as the sites of polyphonic struggles as fields of power-knowledge relations dominating subjectivity. Finally, I present Dennis Mumby’s reading of organizational resistance. He points out that organizational resistance is a discursive practice. Therefore, organizational members’ storytelling performances create a space for this everyday practice and tactics.

**Tracing Sociology of Professions**

**From functionalism to interactionism professions.** Before the late 1960s, the sociology of the professions was predominated by a functionalist perspective derived from the work of Durkheim’s (1957) professional ethics (Macdonald, 1995). Durkheim (1957) argues that the division of labor and occupational groups represents the basic moral standard in modern society. This view leads Durkheim to treat professions as entities embodying the “eufunctional social forces,” which means that those occupational groups are to be found at the level between the individual and the state (Macdonald, 1996, p. 2). This perspective has been appreciated by sociologists, such as Lynn (1963) pointing out:
Our professional institutions are...an important stabilizing factor in our whole society and through their international associations they provide an important channel of communication with the intellectual leaders of other countries, thereby helping to maintain world order (p. 653).

What Lynn suggests reveals that the mainstream of the sociology of professions was dominated by functionalism and focused on the traits, definition, and the use of professionalism in order to classify occupations on the continuum up to the late 1960s (Macdonald, 1995). However, from the early 1970s, the functionalism of professions had been increasingly challenged and rejected, and the perspective of interactionism started merging into scholars’ works for understanding professions (cf. Freidson, 1970a, 1970b). These studies primarily argue for professions as subject matter toward the actions and interactions of both individuals and groups to discuss how human beings constitute day-to-day social worlds and constructed their careers, and the majority body of research in this period discusses professional power and professions as social actors (Macdonald, 1995).

Hall (1983) indicates that power approach has dominated the writing on the professions in the field of sociology. Freidson’s (1970b) *The Profession of Medicine* uses the term “organized autonomy” (p. 71) to describe professional power as “[the] virtue of winning the support of a political, economic, or social elite” (p. 188). Macdonald (1995) argues that the theme of medical profession “exercise[s]” the autonomy to avoid “interference and supervision,” but fails to use formal control over professional members (p. 5). This is why such focus is labeled as a power approach for studying professions even if Freidson considers autonomy rather than power. In fact, this trend has been
adopted by some other scholars’ works of professions later, such as Abbott (1988) and Hall (1983).

Instead of discussing professional power, another trait of studying professions from an interactionism perspective is reading professions as social actors (Macdonald, 1995). Macdonald (1995) points out that this line developed more slowly, but insightfully and radically because, as Hughes (1963) indicates, the fundamental question to study profession should concentrate on what circumstances human beings in an occupation intend to turn themselves into professional people. Freidson (1983) later explains:

If “profession” may be defined as a folk concept then the research strategy appropriate to it is phenomenological in character. One does not attempt to determine what a profession is in an absolute sense so much as how people in a society determine who is a professional and who is not, how they “make” or “accomplish professions by their activities (p. 27).

What Freidson suggests here is that society members are constantly aware of the performance in every aspect of members of professions because they monitor, assess, evaluate, and produce “the climate of opinion” providing information for crucial professional standing (Macdonald, 1995, p. 7). Therefore, professional bodies are claimed as the professional group and make specific decisions to affect every professional standing. “[P]rofessional trait” or “professional power” are constantly being defined and evaluate by the whole society (p. 7). This perspective has also been recognized by Larson’s (1977) research objectives of professional project:

[T]hese ideal-typical constructions do not tell us what a profession is, but only what it pretends to be…Everett C. Hughes and his followers…is critical of this approach, and asks instead what professions actually do in everyday life to negotiate and maintain their special position. The salient characteristics of the professional phenomenon emerge…from the observation of actual practices (p. xii).
In sum, following The Chicago School of sociology, Larson later claims that her intention is to examine how the occupations society identifies as professions organize to attend the market power. In the next section, I briefly summarize Larson’s professional project to explain how her developed view of the interactionism of professions offers a refresh theme to study occupations.

**Larson’s professional project.** Professional project is the term that Larson (1977) employs in her work, *The Rise of Professionalism*, and has been used regularly by many sociologists and social historians. Macdonald (1995) argues that this book represents a development of the power approach to the sociology of the profession and departs from the functionalism that dominated the sociological perspective in mid-twentieth century. Larson (1977) conceptualizes professional project directly from Weber’s view of stratification and makes a clear argument of her approach as follows:

Professionalization is thus an attempt to translate one order of scarce resources—special knowledge and skills—social and economic rewards. To maintain scarcity implies a tendency to monopoly: monopoly of expertise in the market, monopoly of status in a system of stratification. The focus on the constitution of professional markets leads to comparing different professions in terms of the “marketability” of their specific cognitive resources…The focus on collective social mobility accentuates the relations the professions from with different systems of social stratification; in particular, it accentuates the role that educational systems play in different structures of social inequality…These are two different readings of phenomenon: professionalization and its outcome. The focus of each reading is analytically distinct. In practice, however, the two dimensions—market control and social mobility—are inseparable… (p. xvii).

Larson’s work reveals that market control and social mobility are the professional project because it “emphasizes the coherence and consistence,” and “the goals and strategies
pursued by a given group are not entirely clear or deliberate for all members” (p. 6). This point of view later appears in her summary statement of the theoretical model:

The process of organization for a market of services…has theoretical precedence: for indeed, in order to use occupational roles for the conquest of social status, it was necessary first to build a solid base in the social division of labor…Actually, all the devices mobilized for the construction of a professional market and the organization of the corresponding area of the social division of labor also served the professions’ drive toward respectability and social standing…the success of the professional mobility project depended on the existence of a stable market; but also, in the process of securing a market, the professions variously incorporated ideological supports connected with the anti-market structures of stratification…Because these models evoked legitimizing notions of disinterestedness and noblesse oblige, they helped to guarantee on the market the professions’ ethicality (p. 66).

Macdonald (1995) further explains that the market control requires “a body of relatively abstract knowledge, susceptible of practical application, and a market potential” (p. 10). Therefore, this function will require a restricted access to knowledge (Macdonald, 1995) and control the “production of producers” (Larson, 1977, p. 71).

Larson (1977) also mentions that market control and social prestige are connected with each other because the two constructs can be treated as the same empirical material. Therefore, social prestige is the means of social mobility in the professional project and can be distinguished in the three dimensions: (1) independent or dependent on an achieved market position; (2) modern or traditional; and (3) autonomous or heteronomous (p. 68). Macdonald (1995) critiqued that this scheme takes as given the social, economic, and ideological climate to give it a level of generality that would diminish its applicability to specific situations or topics, but he also points out that not many scholars make any adverse comments. In Larson’s work, she links individual aspirations with collective action, which is the drive of collective mobility. She also
contributes to the discussion of the importance of relations between rank and file members. It is important to recognize that Larson’s work does not draw much attention to individuals because she is working from documentary material dealing with collectivities and elites of professions (Macdonald, 1995). Therefore, this can be a significant point for future study; to conduct analysis on individual members because Larson’s work addresses theoretical perspectives for the relationship between individuals and collectivities of professions (Macdonald, 1995).

**Abbott’s the system of the professions.** In his germinal work, Abbott (1988) mentions that professions tend to develop a common pattern, defined as professionalization, and “the movement from an individualistic to systematic view of professions” should be taken seriously (p. 2). He challenges five empirical hypotheses of professionalization. The first empirical assumption is that professions develop in a unidirectional form in both structural and cultural perspectives, but Abbott argues that both sociological theorists and historians have attacked this assumption because there are a variety of directions for professional evolvement. The second assumption is that most work on professions continues to be done on a one-by-one basis. Abbott argues that some works on subprofessions emphasize the independence of different professional development, such as medical areas, social work, different types of engineers, law, or accounting. The third assumption considers that structure is more important than actual work. He critiques that much literature discusses power but do not pay enough attention to the actual work. In other words, as Abbott describes, sociological theorists do not really focus on the concept of professional development. Fourth, empirical research
ignores the internal differentiation in professions, and it simplifies the process of professionalization. Abbott believes that it is dangerous to ignore internal processes because differences exist in intra-professional prestige, in locations of work, and in access to professional power, and these characters may also affect professional development. Finally, the assumption of professionalization is a general process which lacks of its own time and history. Abbott mentions that sociologists forcefully challenge this assumption because the increasing involvement of the state reshaped professionalization. In sum, Abbott concludes that focusing on “work” rather than focusing on organizational structure should be the alternative assumption of professionalization (p. 19). Therefore, professional life is the link between profession and its work, and this link is referred to “jurisdiction” (p. 20).

Abbott (1988) describes that the tasks of professions are “human problems amenable to expert service” (p. 35). Abbot argues that the subjective qualities of professional tasks include the construction of the problem by the profession holding the jurisdiction of that task; therefore, it is necessary to analyze the professional work itself in order to investigate the qualities of jurisdictions. There are three parts of the jurisdictional claims, which are called the three acts of professional practice. They are diagnosis, inference, and treatment. Abbott explains that both diagnosis and treatment are mediating acts. Diagnosis provides information for knowledge system, and treatment brings instructions for solutions. Inference, on the other hand, is a purely professional act. These three practices function as professional knowledge: (1) the crucial aspects of inference are the logical structure, the tenuousness of inferential chains, and the balance
of inference against routine professional processing; (2) the important properties of treatment are the measurability of results, the specificity of treatment, the acceptability of the treatment to clients, and efficacy itself; and (3) main perspectives of diagnosis are the restriction of relevant information, the clarity of classification, and the residual categorization by the system (Abbott, 1988, pp. 57-58). These three practices help the professions determine something problematic through knowledge system by categorizing problems, thinking of them, and acting toward them. That is why Abbott also indicates that “work is tied directly to a system of knowledge that formalizes the skills on which this work proceeds” (p. 52).

Abbott (1988) disagrees that a knowledge system is the same as a professional system. He argues that the professions develop apart from formal knowledge systems which are organized by a classification and an inferential system. In order to sustain its jurisdictions, professions need to process their own knowledge through “power and prestige” (p. 54). Abbott explains that prestige usually reflects publics’ mistaken belief which abstract professional knowledge is more practical. Therefore, prestigious knowledge refers to effective professional work, but most modern professional knowledge still has its own values of rationality, logic, and science. Abbott (1988) concludes that the world of professional work relies on a rationalizing and ordering system which justifies it with some general values, and the system will generate new means for professional work claiming jurisdiction. In order to claim jurisdiction, a profession will ask society to recognize its cognitive structure through exclusive rights, including “absolute monopoly of practice and of public payments, self-discipline and of
unconstrained employment, control of professional training, of recruitment, and of licensing” (Abbott, 1988, p. 59). These exclusive rights are dependent on different channels of claims, such as audience, public media, professions own desires, or social organization of the professions themselves. Abbott (1988) argues that professional organizations usually focus on making members aware of their personal effects on public perceptions and early professional ethics codes, represented the aspect of professional behaviors in work sites.

Abbott (1988) further discusses that the social structure of the groups make the jurisdictional claims, which are professions themselves. He mentions that groups, controls, and worksites are the three primary aspects of a professional social organization. It is important to understand some groups are organized around professional memberships, and some others embody in special interests within the memberships (Abbott, 1988). Professional controls include training and testing practitioners, identifying licenses, and setting ethical codes to follow. However, it is unclear “whether researcher should identify professions by the group claims or by the functional realities” (Abbott, 1988, p. 81) because it is problematic to analyze professions like the military or engineering which “openly include several levels of training and experience under a single professional canopy” (pp. 81-82). Therefore, Abbott (1988) suggests that the contradiction between defining professions by their claims or functions can be solved by identifying and maintaining the importance of professional social structure and profession’s abilities within a competing system. That is said, professions create rigid entry standards and design the extensive education with several levels of examinations,
and this process helps protect recruitment, control professional members, and guarantee the standard of professional ability (Abbott, 1988).

**Knowledge and professions.** Halliday (1987) indicates that knowledge is a “core generating trait” of professionalism (p. 29) while Abbott (1988) and Larson’s (1977) works also share with the same treatments of the professions. Macdonald (1995) points out that sociologists consider a model of rational, formalized scientific knowledge as their starting point to investigate professions and the relationship with other features and social contexts. Macdonald further describes that professions are “knowledge-based occupations,” and “the nature of knowledge, the socio-cultural evaluation of knowledge and the occupation’s strategies in handling knowledge base” are the central emphasis (p. 160). Murphy (1988) states that “the process of formal rationalization has generated a new type of knowledge, [which is] the systematic, codified, generalized knowledge of the means of control” (p. 246). This “formally rational abstract knowledge” is “to calculate market profitability, to organize the bureaucracies, and to develop, apply, and predict the laws of the legal system” (p. 246). In other words, professional knowledge is abstract, generalizing, and self expanding (Macdonald, 1995). Society may distinguish that the knowledge is certified and credentialed (Macdonald, 1995, see Weber, 1978). Credentials and certifications are the kind of representation of knowledge which can be tied to professionalism in a modern society by a relatively high qualification or establishment, and the entry standards require judgment as well (Macdonald, 1995).

Abbott (1988) discusses the quality of characterizing professional work is abstraction because occupational groups control knowledge and skill through abstract
knowledge, and “practical skill [of professions] grows out of an abstract system of knowledge, and control of the occupation lies in control of the abstractions that generate the practical techniques” (p. 8). Abbott (1988) further argues:

[A]bstraction is the quality that sets interprofessional competition apart from competition among occupations in general. Any occupation can obtain licensure (e.g. beauticians) or develop an ethics code (e.g. real estate). But only a knowledge system governed by abstraction can redefine its problems and tasks, defend them from interlopers, and seize new problems—as medicine have recently seized alcoholism, mental illness, hyperactivity in children, obesity and numerous other things. Abstraction enables survival in the competitive system of professions (pp. 8-9).

In fact, the actual tasks of professions are human problems which are amenable to expert service, but a particular profession needs to engage in cultural work to ensure the qualities of the problem are worth the granting of jurisdiction—diagnosis, inference, and treatment (Abbott, 1988; Macdonald, 1995). In Abbott’s (1988) analysis of examples in medicine, he conducts each stage of procedures of classification and abstraction closely to the formal knowledge system. However, Macdonald (1995) argues that the necessary cultural work and knowledge base is lacking for other kinds of occupation, such as law, psychiatry, architecture, librarianship, and military strategy, to claim a professional jurisdiction, and they can provide the legitimation and scientific development. Therefore, Abbott’s (1988) sociological analysis of professional knowledge reveals the importance of applying cultural work to professional knowledge because professional work should be justified by cultural values to generate new meanings rather than simply relying on a traditional rationalizing and ordering system.

In this section, I outline the primary sociologists’ works to explain what professional is. Larson (1977) considers that professionalism is driven from Aristocratic
society, which represents the collective mobility and the traditional class privilege of education, expertise, and association. Abbott (1988) indicates that the concept of professional need to be examined both as an individual and as a jurisdictional system. Macdonald (1995) argues that an organizational group, “deploy its resources in its struggle for collective social mobility” (p. 5), and there is a process of professionalization inside an organizational group. These germinal sociological works develop the idea of professional as collective, but the field does not fully explore the concept of professional as an individual (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Many scholars take the individual subject as the central concern to search “how individuals experiments with selves or narrates tales of self…as the major contribution to identity construction” (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008, p. 18, also see Giddens, 1991; Ibarra, 1999; Larder, 2004). Therefore, “how professional identity is constructed, maintained, and altered” is a valid point for organizational communication scholars connecting sociological perspective to develop communicative practice of professional identity (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007, p. 149). In the next section, I highlight the identity research in organizational communication studies and turn the discussion to how communication scholars suggest a multidimensional communicative approach to study professional identity.

**Communicating Professional Identity**

*Highlights of identity research in organizational communication studies.* The concept of identity has been widely theorized within different disciplinary areas through “a veritable discursive explosion” in the past few years (Hall, 1996, p. 1). Deriving from the anti-essentialist critique, identity is seen as a constructing process through some
common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, and this process is never completed (Hall, 1996). Alcoff and Mohanty (2006) indicate that identities can be no less real for being socially and historically situated, and for being relational, dynamic, and ideological entrapments. Because identities are subject to an individual’s interpretation of their meaningfulness and salience in one’s life, their political implications are not transparent or fixed (Alcoff & Mohanty, 2006). Therefore, personal identity, which is understood as social beings embedded in an organizational context, is the form of subjectivity related to values and behaviors while organizational identities turn to be not so much important in the formation of personal notions of self (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thoms, 2008).

Influenced by critical and post-structuralism perspectives, various studies from organizational communication have conceptualized the identity building process as a way to understand a range of organizational settings and phenomena as a site of struggle over the meanings of levels from micro/individual to macro/collective (Alvesson et al., 2008; Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). These studies treat identity as the product from a competing, fragmentary, and contradictory discourse to yield insight on the topics of motivation, individual and collective behavior, managerial work, organizational change, corporate image, control and resistance, and relations of gender and race-ethnicity (cf. Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Ashcraft & Pacanowsky, 1996; Deetz, 1992, 1995, 1998; Mumby, 1997; Tracy, 2004a, 2004b; Trethewey 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2001; Tretheway & Ashcraft, 2004). Tracey and Trethewey (2005) indicate that human beings’ subject positions are determined by structures of discourse, and we need to negotiate the oppressive discourses.
from organizational context because of the “growing centrality of work” (p. 169).

“Within the power inequalities of organizations, identity is…available to be negotiated and re-negotiated, defined and redefined” (Collinson, 1992, p. 31). Hence, the concentration on the relationship of power and resistance brings organizational communication scholars paying attention to “individualized narrative of career that cultivates constant entrepreneurial activity and associated forms of self-discipline” (Alvesson et al., 2008).

The topic of individuals engaging in ongoing identity construction has a major influence in organizational communication scholarship (Alvesson et al., 2008). This approach investigates “how individuals deal with their complex and often ambiguous and contradictory experiences of work and organization” (pp. 14-15). Organizational members may create a self-narrative by drawing on the cultural resources, memories, and desires to reproduce their sense of self (Knights & Willmott, 1989; Sveningson & Alvesson, 2003). This area of study argues that identity work in organizational studies is about becoming rather than being (Alvesson et al., 2008) because the daily reproduction of self-identity may be triggered by uncertainty, anxiety, questioning or self-doubt (Collinson, 2003; Knights & Willmott, 1989). Influenced by post-structuralism, some organizational communication studies consider identity construction as a continuous process (Simpson & Carroll, 2008; Carroll & Levy, 2008). Other studies point out that identity work can be more conscious and concentrated by crisis through fragmented contexts chronically (Beech, 2008; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008; Watson, 2008). These studies reveal that:
specific events, encounters, or transitions as well as more everyday forms of stress and strain can serve to heighten awareness of the constructed quality of self-identity and compel more concentrated identity work. Conscious identity work is thus grounded in at least a minimal amount of self doubt and self openness, typically contingent upon a mix of psychological existential angst and complex or problematic social situations. This may be due to a mismatch between self-understandings and the social ideals prompted through discourse (Alvesson et al., 2008, p. 15).

As the quote above points out, the tension between self and other in identity work, issues of power, regulation, and resistance of self are raised (Alvesson et al., 2008).

Alvesson, Ashcraft, and Thomas (2008) argue that research on identity work primarily explores individuals’ understanding of themselves and social situations as the “native’s point of view” (p. 16). However, the focus in this area also turns to understand “the role of organizational elites and discursive regimes” (re)negotiating identities between self-regulation and political and material consequences (p. 16). This approach intends to investigate “how identities are controlled” and “how [organizational members] consent to and resist [the] efforts through the exercise of disciplinary power” (p. 16). These questions bring managerial perspectives into the conversation because of the interest in regulating organizational members through the self image, feelings, values, and identification (Willmott, 1993). As Deetz (1995) argues, organizational control is imposed by both self-positioned employees and managerial discourses. More likely, employees may take the managerial discourses with their own self-identity narratives to construct themselves as managed identity members (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) through processes of corporate induction and trainings (Alvesson et al., 2008). In sum, this “identity control” through employment relationship (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p. 623)
helps individuals integrate the search for their identities which can be incorporated into more sense of self (Ibarra, 1999).

**Approaching professional identity through a communication perspective.**

Cheney and Ashcraft (2007) systematically review the foundation of professional in sociological perspective and position “professionalism as a contested term and a nexus of important theoretical and practical concerns in communication [field]” (p. 146).

Articulating a sociological perspective with a communication approach, they point out that professional is “less an instantiation of given or established structural categories and more a set of discursive and material processes [enforced and negotiated] by various aspects of social identity and relations” (p. 153). Therefore, three themes are identified to understand cultural constructions of professional from a communication standpoint: (1) the professional as division of labor in modern society; (2) the professional as claim-to-expert class; and (3) the professional as normative-ethical obligation (p. 153). In this article, they further argue that sociological views suggest that a communicative voice reveals accountability to the embodied, physical, and material dimensions of professional and should be demanded in further development. They also critique that professional has become a trendy term in contemporary society and becomes a “taken-for-granted” reference by physical appearance as well as by spoken and written words. They argue that professionalism should be “the means of shaping, containing, and legitimizing appearance, decorum, behavior, and attitude” (p. 157) and is also a highly suggestive of “multiple aspects” of performance (p. 158). Therefore, personal identity and organizational performance should be brought together to discuss the professional or
professionalism in communication discipline. In sum, Cheney and Ashcraft (2007) propose three communication approaches to study the professional: (1) in popular culture; (2) in mundane interaction; and (3) as a political—rhetorical—device that can orchestrate and obscure intersectionality (p. 159).

Cheney and Ashcraft (2007) argue that the professional as a constellation of concepts, meanings, and practices, is a subject of significant attention in popular culture. The research agenda in this approach is “how organization discourse influences larger cultural trends” and “how popular discourse organizes work identities and relations” (p. 160). This agenda echoes what Alvesson et.al. (2008) suggest that extra-individual forces, including organizational discourses and societal/cultural discourses, should be considered as agents functioning in identity construction. In reviewing different case studies, Cheney and Ashcraft (2007) indicate that popular influences on professional norms and practices in the workplaces may be found in training programs, in member conversations, and in blogs by professional groups (also see Lair, 2007). Eventually, they conclude that there is the need to apply multi-disciplinarity in researching representations of professional and how diverse influences from different subcultures and associations shape professional identity interactively. On the other hand, they also discuss the importance of the professional in mundane life, and the central topic in this area is “how real people navigate the cultural code of professionalism in everyday life” and “how they respond in daily interaction across various contexts to institutionalized expectations for professional demeanor” (p. 161). They mention that diverse sites of performance emerges in not only the usual professional workplace, but also work sites not typically called
professional where organizational members also perform their professional conduct. They believe that different work sites can reflect specific cultural values on larger discourses of the professional; therefore, they suggest organizational communication scholars explore how people perform professional in situated norms. In sum, Cheney and Ashcraft (2007) argue that professional operates “colloquially” to all kinds of labor activity (p. 163), and an organizational member can act professionally in different degrees in work sites.

In addition, to read the professional from everyday practice, exploring the dynamics of intersectionality at work site in larger professional discourses provides a powerful interpretation for addressing the materially and politically conscious communicative approach (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). The professional is a political formation which can manipulate divisions and hierarchies of labor based on different human factors because “labor and laboring bodies are generally configured, coded and evaluated, in terms of discourses of difference” (p. 163). Meanwhile, discourses of differences always function to organize professional identity, and reproduce the division and hierarchy of labor (see Ashcraft, 2007). Therefore, the concentration of this approach is how professional groups construct and secure their own interests in this discursive practice, and how dominant cultural and institutional codes of professional behaviors are reflected in discourses of difference, such as resistance of professional norms (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). It is important to recognize that political dimensions are not always relevant to cultural expressions of the professional, but Cheney and Ashcraft argue that “the professional is a productive nexus, or organizing construct, around which to deepen our understanding of intersectionality at work” (p. 166).
Cheney and Ashcraft (2007) point out a risk here that it is necessary, to “interrogates when, where, how, and with what consequences the professional is taken granted” even if “communicative inquiry dull[ing] this critical edge will not likely contribute the sort of novel [and] provocative voice” (p. 168). The contribution of this article is that:

a communication-oriented analysis brings to light the fundamentally rhetorical character of these ongoing formations, as well as other consequential meanings and functions of professional: inventing or coding a kind of activity and work or worker; indexing, expressing, and evoking modes of performance; producing, maintaining, and (de)valuing occupational networks; and facilitating, yet obscuring intersectionality at work (p. 168).

In sum, insights from communication perspectives associated with the issues of labors, experts, and ethical obligation in modern society may help to challenge “how classes and relations of labor emerge in discourse” and “how labels, metaphors, and narratives evolve and function in everyday practice” (p. 168).

Later, Cheney, Lair, Ritz, and Kendall (2010) published a valuable book, *Just a Job?: Communication, Ethics & Professional Life*, primarily focusing on the understanding of ethics in the professional realm. In this book, Cheney et al. (2010) suggest that ethics should be “a perspective informing the totality of our professional and personal lives” (p. 19). Sociological works have emphasized ethical obligation as institutional development of the professional (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007) while Cheney et al. (2010) try to answer “how a perspective on ethics grounded in communication and rhetoric can illuminate certain ways in which we unnecessarily restrain the influence of ethics at work” (p. 19). In this work, the authors intend to answer meanings of ethical implications in diverse messages, such as “just a job,” from everyday conversations to
website, and everyday conversations are words for things and relationship, for describing ideologies and systems, and for outside experience (Cheney et al., 2010). It is important to recognize that ethics is embodied in everyday life and in the symbol systems we operate, and we need to be “critical” and “emancipatory” in order to evaluate right and fault, and to strengthen ethical systems (p. 58). Cheney et al., (2010) suggest that organizational communication studies should examine how ethical principles are practiced through languages to reflect, revise, and reinforce upon organizational beliefs.

In Abbott’s (1988) work, jurisdiction is the link between the profession and its work, which is a natural extension of specialization and refers to authority and responsibility. Individuals’ professions are a jurisdiction expressing a profession’s claim to moral competence and superiority over members who are not in the same professional group (Cheney et al., 2010). “To formalize a profession we turn to those in a particular professional group, who have earned the right to make determinations about what count as ‘good work’ or ‘a job well done’”; therefore we allow professional members to set standards for us respecting and applying, which involves an explicit social contract because there is an implied consensus governing choices as acting like the profession (p. 126). Meanwhile, specialization represents a horizontal order of a profession in organizations and society because it defines work activities as sufficiently different from one another to create their own space, and a profession can be connected with its own body and knowledge to practice (Cheney et al., 2010). They argue that specialization is horizontal because hierarchies within the professions are ranked within society, and “[the] professions exists side by side, as specialties…to look at in terms of their status
and relative positions on the ‘ladder’” (p. 129). Therefore, we need to challenge what professions encourage ethical reflection in our everyday life and deal with professional identity directly rather than keeping as a vision. Cheney et al.’s (2010) work also mentions that professionalism is an important means to connect individual identity and performance to the needs and goals of society (also see Durkheim, 1964, 1996). In this case, the combination of professional practice and personal identity thus can become integrity of professionalism, but politics and internal problems of professions may still cause some struggles continuously. Hence, “a ‘true professional’ is…to assume practical and moral responsibilities beyond those prescribed by what is traditionally known as a social trusteeship notion of professional responsibility” (Cheney et al., 2010. p. 149), and professionalism will probably transform the meaning of “consumption, efficiency, or entrepreneurship” to different ideas and images attached to others (p. 151).

Professionalism as a contested term is a nexus of theoretical and practical concerns about who we are and what we do at work and beyond (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007; Cheney et al., 2010). Therefore, organizational communication studies should consider challenging the ideas of right or wrong, personal and official, and desirable and inevitable in the language of professionalism because it affects the performance of people at work (Cheney et al., 2010).

Overall, Cheney and Ashcraft (2007) point out that mundane interaction of the professional focuses on how organizational members develop the role of professionalism through institutional structures, such as bureaucratic contexts and socially expert status. Therefore, organizational members will execute their duties not only based on their
education and training but also the broadest values of the organization and publics being served (du Gay, 1996). The rationalization of work requires some degrees of emotional performances directly connected to job performance as well (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007, also see Hochschild, 1983). In Hochschild’s (1983) study, emotional labor is described as “the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (p. 7). She points out that the focus on emotional labor is based upon the idea that employees’ emotional performance is to be “sold for a wage” (p. 7). Hochschild (1983, 1990) argues that there are two types of acting performed by employees. In the deep acting, employees change their feeling by “deliberately visualizing a substantial portion of reality in a different way” (Hochschild, 1990, p. 121). In the surface acting, outward expression is changed without touching internal feeling. Therefore, Hochschild (1983) indicates that employees are unable to distinguish a real self because deep acting “keeps the feelings that I conjure up from being part of ‘myself’” while “in surface acting, the expression on my face or the posture of my body feels ‘put on.’ It is not ‘part of me’” (p. 36). Eventually, how real organizational members express and respond to colloquial images, such as treating as elite level members, when they operate their bodies inside the organizational environment of everyday life (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). This is one focus of being professional in mundane interaction. On the other hand, critical studies of professional bodies, practices, and symbolism can be another approach to figure out the political perspective of the professions (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Although professional identity is organized through organizational members’ discursive process (Ashcraft, 2007), dominant cultures and institutional codes in the professional sometimes
are revealed in discourses of difference (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). This reveals that organizational members are supposed to consent to domination, but the consent is “grudging, partial, inauthentic, and temporary” (Taylor, 2005, pp. 127-128). Hence, organizational members perform the resistance to increase the margins of freedom, dignity, or pleasure in order to seek the meanings and actions foreclosed by managements for certainty, progress, and control (Taylor, 2005). Thus, this insight pushes the project to examine the complex and conflicted relations of organizational members and power (Taylor, 2005). In the next section, I trace key concepts of power and resistance for studying organizational communication studies and further connect the relationships between knowledge, power, discourse, and identity.

**Power, Discourse, and Resistance**

The linguistic turn has led to a growing interest in discourse of both social sciences studies and humanities studies in the later twentieth century. Organizational communication is one field which has undergone a significant paradigm shift, and this paradigm shift is, of course, the hermeneutic or interpretive approach to organizational studies (Mumby, 1993), even recently toward the critical studies approach. This paradigm shifting marks that a meaning-centered approach to organizations has been paid attention to many terms associated with mainstream functionalist organization communication studies, which include “hierarchy, message, effectiveness, and the ‘organization’ itself” (Mumby, 1993, p. 18). Both critical and interpretive approaches focus on exploring the social construction of reality and the role of discourse in the process, but critical approach
considers that social construction of reality is not neutral or unbiased. Instead, it is represented and conflicted by different viewpoints.

A critical approach tends to challenge situations, perceptions, and social practices that may be seen as natural or taken for granted, but have actually been in effect discursively constructed over time by groups in power targeting to biased social reality and institutional arrangements to their own advantages (Gramsci, 1971). In the critical approach, discourse is treated as imbued with ideological hegemony, the process by which dominant classes and groups attempt to construct and perpetuate belief systems which support their own interests, and make the status quo appear commonsensical and natural (Gramsci, 1971). In this case, a critical approach assumes that social representations are primarily constituted through discourse because “managing the mind of others is essentially a function of text and talk” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 254). We can assume that a critical approach sees discursive social reality constructions as full of power and interest considerations, where dominant groups attempt to shape reality, social practices, and subjects identities in ways that perpetuate their own interests. Therefore, discourses, constructed through language, are viewed as the sites of polyphonic struggles as fields of power-knowledge relations which can dominate subjectivity.

In this section, I trace Foucault’s work to discuss the shifts and concerns of power and discourse in his writings first. Scholars have pointed out that some implications for studying organizational communication by applying Foucault’s work. In Foucault’s concept, “power is widely dispersed, having multiple sites and modes of functioning” (Mumby, 2001, p. 606), and it “resides in the discursive practices and formations
themselves” (Deetz, 2001, p. 35). Therefore, organizational discourses are “texts and communicative practices” not only functioning and reproducing certain truths but defining the subject to the process of normalization (Mumby, 2001, p. 606). Thus, Foucault’s emphasis of analyzing in textual fragments can help understand the effects of social meanings and practices (Heracleous, 2006). Second, I further extend the discussion through summarizing how Dennis Mumby’s readings of power and resistance are influenced by Michel Foucault’s concepts and how those concepts can be the conceptual framework to study organizational resistance in critical approach. Meanwhile, the focus on organizational resistance has been examined by organizational studies and sociology scholars. The common view from these different studies demonstrates that organizational resistance is a discursive practice and should not be explained as a single phenomenon. Emerging with communication perspective, organizational member’s storytelling creates a space to perform discursive practice and everyday tactics.

**Foucault’s genealogical writings.** Foucault’s understandings of discourse and analytical methods remarkably shifted in the Genealogical period. Both Archaeological and Genealogical periods in Foucault’s thoughts showed concern for decentering the subject, but his works in the Genealogical period addressed more pragmatic concerns with the effects of discourses on practices and how individuals construct their world (Heracleous, 2006). In the Genealogical period, Foucault primarily linked his views on power explicitly with knowledge and discourse. Foucault (1977a) argues that “selfish interest is radically posed as coming before knowledge, which it subordinates to its need as a simple instrument” (p. 203). He further notes that “we continue to ignore the
problem of power” because “power remains a total enigma” (Foucault, 1977b, pp. 212-213) and need to be thoroughly investigated. Discourse is manifestations of the will to power, and knowledge is not a neutral force. Therefore, discourse is usually biased to dominant interests through power relation.

In *Truth and Power*, Foucault (1980b) challenges traditional views of power, suggesting that power is a property of social relations woven into the fabric of society rather than simply a top-bottom force. Foucault (1983) argues that the exercise of power includes not only simply forcing certain outcomes, but “guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome” (p. 221). From Foucault’s viewpoint, power could only be exercised over free subjects, and their freedom being a condition for the exercise of power is the same as limiting factor on its exercise. Power affects and shapes subjectivity rather than being an external force to the subject, and it is positive and productive rather than just simply repressive and constraining. Foucault (1980b) states:

> What makes power hold good, [and] what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasures, forms knowledge, [and] produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (p. 119).

On the other hand, Foucault (1983) believes that power can be studied by examining the “forms of resistance against different forms of power” (p. 211). Focusing on “power strategies,” or “the totality of the means put[ting] into operation to implement power effectively or to maintain it” (p. 225) can also help explore power in action. Foucault considers that power is constructed the social connection by making difference between “power relations, relationships of communication, and objective capacities” (p. 218). He
argues that these three types of relationships overlap with, support reciprocally, and use each other reciprocally and mutually as means to the end.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977c) shifts his concern to discourse with power/knowledge links where discourses are manifestations of the will to power. He points out that “power produces knowledge” and “power and knowledge directly imply one another, that there is no power relation without correlative constitution of a field of knowledge” (p. 27). Therefore, Foucault (1977c) argues that there is no knowledge which does not presuppose and constitute power relations simultaneously. Since relations of power cannot be constructed without the production and functioning of a discourse, human are subjected to the production of truth through power, and power cannot be exercised unless we, as human beings, produce the truth (Foucault, 1980a). Foucault pays attention on how discourses can serve the interests of power because discourse is still constructive of the subjects. In Foucault’s words:

> If I have studied practices, it was in order to study this interplay between a code, which rules ways of doing things… and a production of true discourses which serve to found, justify and provide reasons and principles for these ways of doing things. To put the matter clearly, my problem is to see how men govern [themselves and others] by the production of truth (1980a, p. 79).

Foucault’s concept of discourse not only connects itself with dominant interests through the production of loaded truths, but also legitimizes some practices promoting these interests and marginalizing other practices challenging the existing privileges.

Foucault also addresses the issue of agency through introducing a tacit acceptance of various facets of the will (will of power) in the Genealogical writing. His theory and analytical frameworks are more subject-oriented in this period. Therefore, he calls for
investigating more references to the levels of action and meaning. Foucault (1977c) considers that genealogy would not need to make explicit reference to the subject because

[it is] a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, and etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history (p. 117).

Overall, in the Genealogical writing, Foucault’s concept of discourse as manifestations of the will to power, linked to practices and institutions, can contribute to critical organizational communication studies. Discourse produces regimes of truth which can be analyzed at the levels of meaning and subjectivity, and Foucault’s interpretation on extensive analysis of specific textual fragments targeted to understand their effects on social meanings and practices are also useful for organizational scholars to develop. In the next section, I approach and summarize major works from Dennis Mumby, explaining how he is influenced by Foucault’s genealogical trace of power and discourse and provides suggestions for critical organizational communication studies, especially in the topic of power and resistance.

**Power, discourse and organizational communication.** Dennis Mumby’s works primarily concentrate on the relationships among discourse, power, and organizations. He is especially interested in process of control and resistance, and the ways in which dialectics in organizations are discursively produced, maintained, and reproduced. Mumby (1988) argues that power is a phenomenon that we confront in every context and aspect of our daily lives. Because power is a structural phenomenon in both product and process, organization members constantly engage in its activity. He points out that the relationship between power and domination should be explored more because “situations
where power is used in such a way… militates against the interests of certain organizational groups, and in favor of others” (p. 55). As such, Mumby is more concerned with situations in which power functions in a hegemonic fashion to structure the system of interests in organizations. In this case, Mumby and Stohl (1991) point out that critical approaches to organization communication studies should begin to challenge the functionalist orthodox consensus and argue power need to be emerged as “a pivotal concept in explaining the process by which certain organizational and institutional structures prevail over others” (p. 313). Through treating organizations as various texts and contexts, researchers can show how discourse functions constitutively to construct organizational reality in power relationships (Mumby, 1987).

Mumby and Stohl (1991) argue that the concept of power emerging as “essentially contested” runs counter toward its neglect by almost all traditional organizational theory except the domains of “legitimate authority” (p. 315). They further indicate that from other scholars (see Clegg, 1975; Conrad, 1983; Giddens, 1979, 1984; Mumby, 1988), power is described as a deep structure phenomenon, shaping the ways in which organizational members develop their sense of identity and connects fragmented interests to coherence. In this case, Mumby (1988) considers that power is conceived not as simple coercion, but rather as the process through which consensual social relations are articulated within the context of certain meaning systems. On the other hand, Mumby (see Mumby, 1988, 2004; Mumby & Stohl, 1991) pays attention to Stewart Clegg’s works portraying the concept of power. Mumby (2004) argues that Clegg’s works are actually influenced by different theorists, and Foucault is one of them. Mumby quotes
Clegg’s work, that he is engaged studies in “nomadic theorizing with a power compass” (Clegg, 1996, p. 50, cite in 2004, p. 116), stating that Clegg’s works are across multiple domains. Articulating within Foucault’s Genealogical writings, Clegg’s works indicates that Foucault is much more of a Weberian than he never admitted because his project is “remarkable similar to Weber’s concentration on the disciplines associated with bureaucracy” (Clegg, 1994, p. 158, cited in Mumby, 2004, p. 123). In this case, Mumby argues that “Foucault is interested in the anatomy of power, which examines the ways in which it produces obedient bodies and forms of self-knowledge at the level of everyday discourses and practices” (p. 123). This connection has been explored by other scholarly works, discussing how self-directed organizational teams engage in forms of self-surveillance, and those works also articulate the connection between the Weberian concept of rule and the Foucauldian notion of discipline (Mumby, 2004).

Regarding the relationship between power and discourse, Mumby and Stohl (1991) explain that power is neither interdictive nor restrictive but plays a relative productive role in the construction of social reality in the discourse structure. They argue this position is close to Foucault’s conception of the relationship between power and knowledge, and these two aspects both intersect in the production of human subjects. As Foucault (1977c) states, the subject, object, and the modalities of knowledge have to be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power and knowledge and their historical transformations. Hence, discourse is the most fruitful way to examine a site of power which “produces” organizational subjectivity or identity because discursive practices function as a form of discipline which includes organization
members in certain way “within a particular power and knowledge regime” (Mumby & Stohl, 1991, p. 316). Then, discourse and rules can include their function to establish a particular organizational “regime of truth,” and organizational members are objectified in the same time and see themselves as subjects in this situation (p. 316).

For critical organizational communication scholars, power can be viewed not simply as a coercive organizational force, but also as a structured and relational feature of organizational life which constructs both identity formation and disciplining of organizational members. Mumby and Stohl (1991) suggest that power envisioned as hegemony gets to everyday aspects of ongoing organizational practices which operate to constitute individuals as organizational subjects. Moreover, power can be conceived to neither be located in individual actions purely nor determined in features of organizational structure, but power must also be seen as constructed through in the discursive practices of structuring organizational life. Through viewing power as a structural phenomenon, the interdependence with the “everydayness” of organizational life is embodied in communicative practices (Mumby & Stohl, 1991, p. 317).

**Resistance and dominance in organizations.** Mumby and Stohl (1991) articulate Foucault’s concept of power with Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, and Foucault’s writings on practices, techniques, and methods influencing minds and bodies provide a way of understanding hegemony functioning at an everyday level. Mumby (1997) critiques that early critical studies influenced by neo-Marxism have focused on explicating and critiquing the processes through produced and reproduced structures of domination. Derived from the works of Foucault (1977c, 1980b) and de Certeau (1984),
Mumby proposes that the “postmodern turn” emphasizing “local knowledge” have been paid more attention on resistance of organizing processes (p. 357). Mumby argues that the problematic is revealed in a false dichotomy created in the critical studies between organizational dominance and resistance. Mumby (1997) identifies two different approaches to study power in organizations. First, Hobbesian’s sovereign model treats power as a causal and top-down phenomenon, and agents act in different ways to influence the behavior of others. On the other hand, Machiavelli’s model of power is viewed as a productive, disciplinary, and strategic phenomenon without specific center. Foucault’s (1977c) writing reflects toward Machiavelli’s model, and Mumby (1997) believes that Gramsci’s philosophy is consistent with an attempt to resolve this false dichotomy between dominance and resistance.

Mumby (1997) further points out that some organizational communication studies have mentioned that relations of domination cannot be understood through the principle of coercion, but must be interpreted as a process in which subordinated groups participate in the construction of their own subordination. Placing this within a larger social context, a social group will remain in power through preventing other groups from framing their thoughts and interests that might challenge the position of dominant group (Mumby, 1997). In order to examine this conception of hegemony through the discursive practices, the study of organizational storytelling can be a rich and proactive area which has focused primarily on the ways in which members’ stories reproduce the status quo (Mumby, 1987, 1988, 1997). It is important to recognize that this discussion is not just to criticize the failure of the dominance model because this model has augmented greatly
scholars’ understanding of the relationship between communication and politics of everyday organizational life. The concern here is that dominance model is based on a narrow and undialectical reading of the concept of hegemony. In this case, Mumby (1997) calls for the necessary to address extensively to the phenomenon of resistance.

Developing primarily from postmodern perspective, Mumby (1997) points out those works discussing organizational control and resistance problematizes the neo-Marxist conceptualizes power through a totalizing sovereign model predicated on the dominance of the capitalist mode of production (also see Foucault, 1980b). The discursive practice of organizational members as they attempt to create spaces of resistance subverts the dominant social order (Mumby, 1997). Foucauldian critical analysis has taken seriously claims that factories are similar to prisons in which disciplinary mechanisms operates in the modern organization to produce docile employees; therefore, Foucauldian studies discuss large amount of agency to managerial forms of control and relatively little to the employees who struggle with them in everyday organizational life (Mumby, 2005). This is the major difference in viewpoint with the dominance model because resistance is constructed in the individual term, and any sense of collective worker consciousness and struggle includes interpersonal forms of conflict (Mumby, 2005). Eventually, Foucauldian analysis of the control-resistance dialectic is subject to critiques that they read this relationship in a rather functionalist manner, combining agency with a structural analysis of the disciplinary mechanisms of the workplace (Mumby, 2005).
Mumby (2005) calls for the discursive turn in the particular poststructuralist approach for organizational communication studies examining resistance increasingly in communicative practice. He argues that the perceived neglect of employee subject as agent attempts to counteract the impression that power in the Foucault’s framework is a force with no possibility for escape. He also extends the argument that studies in resistance represent “a means not only of exploring the positivity of power, but also of conceptualizing agency as positive and productive” (Mumby, 2005, p. 32). In other word, resistance is treated as a result of the reactivity of subject effects. Therefore, poststructuralist analysis considers workplace resistance as a discursive practice which needs to be analyzed not as “a specific, identifiable phenomenon, or set of behaviors, but as a complex, contradictory, and socially situated attempt to construct oppositional meanings and identities” (p. 36). In sum, Mumby (2005) concludes that the most powerful conceptions of resistance are (a) the practice of a wholly coherent, fully self-aware subject operating from a pristine, authentic space of resistance or (b) the activities of social actors that are subsumed within, and ultimately ineffectual against, a larger system of power relations (p. 37). He calls for further exploration of resistance through the tensions and contradictions embedded in the dialectical practices because this can create the possibilities for organizational change and transformation.

Overall, Mumby (2001) points out that studying organizational power and resistance shifts the focus on the relationships among communication, power, and organizing. Mumby (2001) further expresses that “organizations as discursive sites of identity formation and meaning creations” create the possibilities to expand the
traditional notion of “an organization” (p. 614). In such cases, organizations as the sites for members “inhabit” multiple discursive positions to articulate everyday discourses and to provide meanings of subjective experiences that make sense of members’ life (Gregg, 1993, p. 5).

**Summary**

In this chapter, I paid closely attention to sociological studies of professions, specifically discussing germinal works from sociological scholars, such as Larson (1977), Abbott (1988), and Macdonald (1995). I further extended the discussion from sociological perspective to put it in conversation with a communication perspective, especially in the field of organizational communication studies. Few organizational communication scholars have called for us to pay close attention to professionalism and professional identity studies in organizational communication research (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007; Cheney, Lair, Ritz, & Kendall, 2010). Their works suggest that advancing communication based understandings of meanings and practices of professionalism is a complement to the sociological conception. Meanwhile, the discussion of power, discourse, and resistance in organizations reveals that resistance is not a single phenomenon, rather a discursive practice. By bringing a communication perspective into conversation, organizational members’ storytelling creates a space to perform discursive practice and everyday tactics regarding their professional identities. In the next chapter, I outline the specific methodological choices I apply to explore how discourses function to organize Taiwanese commercial airline pilots’ professional
identities. I also explain the research design, data collection process, and data analysis plan of this dissertation project.
Chapter Three: Methodology and Research Design

Before I start addressing the methodology and research design for this dissertation project, I would like to join the scholarly conversation regarding the relationship between the performance paradigm, personal narrative, and rhetoric. The performance paradigm has offered a remarkable approach to study the meanings of human behavior, consciousness, and culture (Conquergood, 1998), while ethnography is referred to “the task of describing a particular culture” (McCurdy, 1972, p. 3, cited in Alexander, 2005, p. 411). In the communication field, performance ethnography is defined as “the staged re-enactment of ethnographically derived notes” (Alexander, 2005, p. 411) and one critical research method to understand how politics and practices shape human experience (Denzin, 2003). D. Soyini Madison (2005) indicates that performance studies has become a significant and popular phenomenon because of the idea that human beings are a performing species, and the performances from human beings reveal themselves reflexively (also see Turner, 1985). She further argues that performance becomes necessary if we accept the notion that human are always in the act of performance. Performance ethnography engages social action in the relationship of how participants and audiences present in the act of performing the lives of others in a larger politics of representation and identity, and the attempt is to “frame performance as a critical reflective and refractive lens to view the human condition and a form of a reflexive agency that initiates action” (Alexander, 2005, p. 412). Therefore, this dissertation project
is expected to exam Taiwanese commercial airline pilots’ performance of professional identity in everyday life, and the performance I engage in as the researcher is on the page while the audience is the reader of this project. In the next section, I review the relevant literatures in the performance paradigm, specifically focusing on Dwight Conquergood’s interventions of performance ethnography (1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1991, 1992, 1998, 2002). By reviewing Conquergood’s concept of performance ethnography, I discuss the link between ethnography and performance possibilities in order to comprehend and recognize the deeper significance of performance paradigm. Second, I connect performance ethnography with personal narratives research to argue that narrative is embodied in discursive communication practices by situational and material conditions to critique existing relations of power and knowledge (Peterson & Langellier, 2006). A critical performance, focused on personal narrative, can reveal relations of power. Therefore, I bring a critical rhetoric perspective into this scholarly conversation. The purpose of critical rhetoric is to focus on “the dimensions of domination and freedom as they are exercised in a relativized world” (McKerrow, 1989, p. 91). Blending critical rhetoric with a performance paradigm and personal narrative may provide a fresh look and challenge the textual bias of rhetorical studies, providing an opportunity to locate power in the personal, social, structural, and cultural. A performance paradigm can further bring the body back to rhetoric by locating the embodied experiences of commercial airline pilots within organizations. Finally, I present the research design, data collection procedures, and data analysis plan involved in this dissertation project.
The Performance Paradigm

Cultural performance. A performance paradigm explores and considers human activities as expressions (Alexander, 2005). Madison (2005) argues that performance addresses the notion of experience from our everyday existence, and expressions derive from experiences because human beings perform what we experience through story, gossip, humor, or any other forms. It is important to recognize that performance is not necessarily driven by individual experiences (Madison, 2005), but is also layered with social, cultural, and political experiences (Conquergood, 1986a). Victor Turner’s (1982a, 1982b, 1985, 1988) comprehensive works can be a valuable resource to explore the relationship between performance, culture, and ethnography. Cultural performance is framed by cultural conventions (Madison, 2005) and refers to “the collective expectations and practices of members of particular communities” (Alexander, 2005, p. 416). Madison (2005) argues that culture performances “show” our behaviors, needs, and desires in order to realize truths that we do not realize in our everyday existence (p. 154). As Turner (1982a) expresses, “when we act in everyday life we do not merely re-act to indicative stimuli, we act in frames we have wrested from the genres of culture performance” (p. 122). Therefore, Alexander (2005) considers that the function of culture performance is to define, maintain, and negotiate membership and identity of community. He further mentions that performance ethnography, in this case, focuses on everyday of performance of culture and becomes the source model of re-performing culture.

In the discussion of performance ethnography, Alexander (2005) makes the distinction between cultural performance and the performance of culture. The
The performance of culture reflects “an actual culture refracted through ethnographic practices and situated in performing bodies (re)present[ing] that culture” (p. 416). Because culture operates within the confines of its own constructions and under the forces of externalized pressure, “performance ethnography as a moral discourse” highlights the practices (p. 416). As Conquergood (1986b) points out:

Performance requires a special doubling of consciousness, reflexive self-awareness. The performer plays neither the role of Self and Other; instead of an I or a You, the performer is essentially, at all times, playing a We. [Therefore,] performance can reconcile the tension between Identity, which banalizes, and Difference, which estranges, the Other (p. 34).

Alexander (2005) argues that performance ethnography should not be just reduced to a method. The central question is, “Why do we do performance ethnography?” (p. 417) He treats performance ethnography as a moral discourse, which is a situated activity locating participants, researchers, and observers. This situated activity focuses on the implications and complications of being and knowing others, interprets material practices to make culture visible, and distributes the cultural conditions of living and concerns of humanism. Eventually, Alexander echoes Conquergood’s (1985) argument that performance is a moral act because the dynamics of culture are always in practice with and across borders of perceived difference. Performers (ethnographers) will ask audiences to position themselves related to those being represented in performance (ethnography), and this includes a judgment that affects choice in both the moments during performance and after performance “in which the sensuousness of performative experience resonated in the body and mind…of meaningful expression” (Alexander, 2005, p. 417).
**Performativity.** Because performance is related to “scripts of social discourse constructed with intention and performed by actors in the company of particular audiences” (Alexander, 2005, p. 414), performativity can be the concept to extend the examination of the performance (Madison, 2005). Performativity is understood as a stylized repetition of communitive acts, which are socially and discursively established in the moment of performance (Butler, 1990). Performativity refers to a cultural convention or value, which is performed through the body to mark identities and is extended the importance of repetitive human activities (Alexander, 2005; Madison, 2005). Performativity helps a researcher consider social action as a moment related to the broader power dimension which can be illuminated, interrogated, and intervened (Alexander, 2005; Langellier, 1999). Currently, there are three concerns of performance studies: (1) an appreciation for the aesthetic/creative nature of human expression across borders of text, context, and embodied practice; (2) focusing on the body as site of knowing and showing; and (3) an interest in ethnography as a critical method of observing and studying the performative nature of cultural practice (Alexander, 2005, p. 414). Therefore, Pollock (1998a) argues that performance is an embodied practice with explanatory metaphor for human engagement while performativity is the everyday practice of redoing what is or has been done. This argument also echoes to Denzin’s (1997) conclusion that performance ethnography turns the textual subject to the empirical subject, allowing both performers and audiences to understand the aspects of culture operating experiences from our everyday life.
Both Conquergood (1998) and Madison (2005) mention the emphasis of performativity as citationality (see Butler, 1993) is important because citationality helps us understand how identities are not naturally inherent or biologically determined. Performativity reworked through citationality can also guide us to realize how the meanings and values of politics and culture are socially constructed. Madison (2005) argues that performativity is not only citational, but also has the capability for resistance because it is an internalized repetition of “hegemonic stylized acts inherited from the status quo” and “subversive stylized acts inherited by contested identities” (p. 165). Hence, examinations of performatives and performativity are relevant for critical ethnographers to define human action shaping and guiding the roles, institutions, and values in our life worlds (Madison, 2005). Once ethnography turns to performatives and performativity:

- It reinstates the actualization of everyday cultural performance. It rehydrates the objectified, text-bound description of lives-lived into living embodied forums that offer a greater sense of direct experience and the direct knowing of culture. It reinstates ethnographic bodies to the realm of process, of activity, of doing—negotiating beings, both in the simulated presence of their daily lives as well as within the specified moment of performance (Alexander, 2005, p. 415).

Therefore, performance ethnography is the way to explain, exemplify, and share meaning whether this is ethnography notes or performing theory as a means of practical experience in order to display knowledge or to establish dialogue between the researcher and audiences (Alexander, 2005).

way social scientists measure, manage, and manipulate human behaviors. He called for moving research focus from structures, patterns, and products to struggles, stories, symbols, and performances. Conquergood (1986a) believed that “meaning is in-between structures” and “identity is conjectural and processual” (p. 36). Conquergood argued that the “[s]elf is displaced by the experience-of-becoming a performing self that enacts its identities within a community of others; [therefore,] humanity as performer… is always historically situated, culturally mediated, and intersubjectively constituted” (p. 36).

Conquergood’s (1985) dialogical performance is an important concept for the performance paradigm. It is a way to locate the moral center and ethical behavior in ethnography by centering dialogue. This stance struggles to bring different voices, views, value systems, and beliefs into conversation with each other. Dialogical performance seeks to have intimate conversation with other people and cultures. Conquergood (1985) argues:

One does not have to delay entering the conversation until self and other have become old friends… one cannot build a friendship without beginning a conversation. [Hence,] [d]ialogical performance is the means as much as the end of honest intercultural understanding. But what are the qualities on absolutely need before joining the conversation?… If we bring to our work energy, imagination, and courage—qualities that can be exercised and strengthened through dialogical performance—then we can hope not to trample on “the sweet, terrible wholeness of life” (p. 10).

This paradigm was a reaction to a history of ethnography which was spoken for Others rather than spoken with Others. Additionally, the researcher/ethnographer should make sure performance texts derived from fieldwork are performable because dialogical performance should be presented as co-performance style and live in the embodied practice of radical empiricism (Conquergood, 1985; Madison, 2005). Madison (2005)
further concludes that “coperformance as dialogical performance means you not only do what subjects do, but you are intellectually and relationally invested in their symbol-making practices as you experience with them” (p. 168).

Conquergood’s (1998, 2002) works further address the issues of politics of performance. Conquergood (1998) mentions the triad of mimesis, poiesis, and kinesis to argue the performance as political intervention:

The contours of this new analytic emphasis on process over product can be seen in the shifting meanings of the key word performance as it has emerged with increasing prominence in cultural studies. This semantic genealogy can be summarized as the movement from performance as mimesis to poiesis to kinesis, performance as imitation, construction, [and] dynamism (p. 31).

Adapted from Erving Goffman’s work, Conquergood (1998) argued that social life is “staged, clearly demarcated frontstage and backstage boundaries” and gives “currency to notions of frames, role-playing, impression management, and benign fabrications” (p. 31). Therefore, mimesis is the mode of performing acts reflecting the everyday experiences through dramatic convention or cultural convention (Madison, 2005). Furthermore, Conquergood (1998) brought Victor Turner’s (1985) concept of moving performance from mimesis to poiesis as “making, not faking” (p. 93, cited in Conquergood, 1998, p. 31) and points out that both Turner’s notion of homo performans, and J. L. Austin’s performative move performance from simply mimetic to the higher level of poetic. Conquergood also cites postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha’s word “performative” to discuss “action that incessantly insinuates, interrupts, interrogates, and antagonizes powerful master discourses” (p. 32). Therefore, Michael Taussig’s (1993) work on mimesis can make a full connection to poiesis and kinesis because Taussig
offers to use mimicry to subvert authority to differ forms of the habits, gestures, and life customs of power holders as a subversive act for various purpose (Conquergood, 1998; Madison, 2005). Since mimesis is a subversive movement and is liberating mobility, it becomes imitation for the purpose of intervention (Conquergood, 1998). Eventually, Madison (2005) argues that this trajectory of performance helps ethnographers identify how human beings imitate each other in different ways while they are generating meaning and resist the oppressive power structures. As Conquergood (1998) points out:

Instead of construing performance as *transcendence*, a higher plane that one breaks into, I prefer to think of it as transgression, that force which crashes and breaks through sedimented meanings and normative traditions and plunges us back into the vortices of political struggle—in the language of bell hooks as “movement beyond boundaries” (quotation from Bhabha, 1994, p. 207, cited in p. 32).

Overall, the performance paradigm provides theory for abstract concepts, method for practical analysis, and an event for aesthetic happening (Madison, 2005). Madison (2005) further indicates that Conquergood (2002) provides a more meaningful and productive approach for the performance ethnographer:

Performance [paradigm] is uniquely suited for the challenge of braiding together disparate and stratified ways of knowing. We can think through performance along three crisscrossing lines of activity and analysis. We can think of performance (1) as a work of *imagination*, as an object of study; (2) as a pragmatics of inquiry (both as model and method), as an optic and operator of research; (3) as a tactics of *intervention*, an alternative space of struggle… we often refer to the three *a’s* of performance studies: artistry, analysis, activism. Or to change the alliteration, a commitment to the three *c’s* of performance studies: creativity, critique, citizenship (civic struggles for social justice) (p. 152).

In sum, Conquergood (2002) concludes that the challenge of a performance paradigm should “refuse and supersede [the] deeply entrenched division of labor, apartheid of
knowledges” and distinguish “the difference between thinking and doing, interpreting and making, conceptualizing and creating” (p. 153).

**Performance and Personal Narratives**

Kristin M. Langellier (1989) published the germinal article, “Personal narratives: Perspectives on theory and research,” specifically situating personal narrative as an important research perspective in the communication discipline. She identifies three inquiries of personal narratives. First, what is the definition of personal narrative and its nature? Second, what are significant concepts for understanding personal narrative? The third question is how researchers define context for personal narrative. Langellier locates five theoretical positions to respond to those three inquiries, which are personal narrative as story text, as storytelling performance, as conversational interaction, as social process, and as political praxis. Langellier (1989) expresses that personal narratives happen in our ordinary day and extraordinary events which marks people’s mundane life. Therefore, the purpose for studying personal narratives is to engage the performance in everyday life, the culture of everyday talk, and political implication for our society (Langellier, 1989). In the following section, I summarize details of personal narratives as storytelling performance, performance turn in personal narratives in communication discipline, and the political function of personal narratives.

**The performance turn in personal narratives.** Langellier (1989) indicates that storytelling is a way of speaking by a storyteller to an audience in a social situation through a word and a performance. She considers that personal narratives as storytelling performance concentrates on how a story is told and on how a story delights and/or
compels its listeners. Shifting from text to performance, performance itself is reconceptualized as a true mode of communication with ramifications in a social or cultural situation, and performance is an “integrated approach to narrative [which] overcomes the bifurcation of text and context resulting from more traditional approaches to narratives” (Langellier, 1989, p. 250). Scholars have argued that a performance paradigm enlightens personal narratives studies (Peterson & Langellier, 2006) because “the buzz over performance is nearly everywhere in academy” (Madison & Hamera, 2006, p. xii). Therefore, it is necessary to discuss independently how a performance paradigm intersects and affects personal narrative studies.

Bauman (1986) defines performance as:

> a mode of communication...which resides in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for display of communication skill highlight[ing] the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content (p. 3).

Therefore, the way of understanding personal narratives as “a doing” in performance paradigm is the “evident in explorations of the behaviors, habits, practices, and institutions which enact, execute, or do narrative” (Peterson & Langellier, 2006, p. 174). In other words, how the body is situated in performance narratives, and how the body is performed in both self and other, and the source model of information collected through researcher and/or performer is the main focus on performance personal narrative paradigm (Alexander, 2005). From a communication perspective, Peterson and Langellier (2006) discuss that the performance turn has four significant consequences to studying personal narratives. First, personal narrative “is embodied in communication practices” because it requires “bodily participation in listening and speaking, reading and writing,
seeing and gesturing, and feeling and being touched” (p. 175). Second, personal narrative “is constrained by situational and material conditions” and is not “neutral, transparent, or fixed” (p. 176). They argue that mechanical reproduction, capitalism, nationalist politics, and transnational relations alter the possibilities for storyteller struggling and performing personal narrative. Third, personal narrative “is embedded in and ordered by fields of discourse” (p. 177) because stories order “recite, repeat, and represent” in community and culture (p. 178). Finally, personal narrative “is strategically distributed to reproduce and critique existing relations of power and knowledge” (p. 178). That is said, personal narrative can order lived experiences, meanings, and sensibilities into a broad cultural form reproducing and recapturing power relations and makes it possible to resist and alter these relations (Peterson & Langellier, 2006). Telling personal narratives is an oral storytelling event focused by the narrative performative frame, and the “narrative event” foregrounds the personal as a first-person narrator whether it is self- or other-oriented (Langillier, 1989, p. 255). Overall, personal narrative is structured by the culture in which it operates as performance events, and it can enhance experience to create a possible world in order to convey or challenge personal, social, and traditional values.

Politics of personal narrative—Personal narratives against master narrative.

Personal narratives as political praxis challenge questions regarding power, knowledge, ideology, and identity (Langellier, 1989). Personal narratives “not only evolve as a product of certain power structures, but also function ideologically to produce, maintain, and reproduce those power structures” (Mumby, 1987, p. 113). In this case, Mumby (1987) points out that “storytelling is not a simple representing of a pre-existing reality,
but is rather a politically motivated production of a certain way of perceiving the world which privileges certain interests over others” (p. 114). Because personal narratives can perform “identities and experience” and are the site to articulate, structure and struggle over society (Langeller, 1999, p. 129), the analysis of personal narratives as political praxis needs to consider a text examined for its relation to identities and experiences which are materially embedded with social relations (Langellier, 1989, 1999).

Langellier (1989) argues that personal narratives make meanings when it serves as political praxis. Human beings organize events and actions to form the understanding of a purpose in everyday life, and those stories are told to perform who we are and what we can do in both surface and deepen meaning (Langellier, 1989). Mumby (1987) argues that personal narratives can help understand the social process and can legitimate dominant forms of reality which guide to “discursive closure” that restrict the interpretations and meanings attached to social activity (p. 113). Nevertheless, Langellier (1989) consider all personal narratives ideological because they develop from the structure of power relations and intend to “produce, maintain, and reproduce” the structure (p. 267). All personal narratives participate within the “discourse field” relating to language, organization, subjectivity, and power (p. 267).

Because personal narratives always perform the ongoing ideological struggle for meaning, it is an extension against ideological/power domination/oppression (Langellier, 1989), or what Corey (1998) calls “master narrative” (p. 249):

The master narrative is an artillery of moral truth, and the personal narrative defixes that truth. The master narrative is a cultural discourse, replete with epistemic implications, and the personal narrative is a mode of “reverse discourse” (Foucault, 1982)... through the personal narrative, [storytellers] is able
to “tell about personal, lived experiences in a way that assists in the construction of identity, reinforces or challenges private and public belief systems and values, and either resists or reinforces the dominant cultural practices of the community in which the narrative event occurs” (quotation cites from Stern & Henderson, 1993, p. 35). [Everyone] has a little story, but in the spirit of postmodernism, a little difference becomes a lot of discourse (p. 250).

Based on Corey’s argument, Alexander (2005) points out that master narrative is the dominant way to see or think the world is or should be, and often guides social, cultural, and political rules and orders. Personal narratives stand in relation to the master narratives, which is the reflection of culture and our relation to or in culture. In other words, the personal narrative is always “a reflection on and excavation of the cultural contexts which give rise to experience” (Alexander, 2005, p. 424). Therefore, personal narratives situate human beings in a dialogue with history, social structure, and culture contexts, and these contexts dialogue with each other through action, feeling, and language in our everyday life (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

**Performance and Rhetoric**

**Critical rhetoric as performance.** Conquergood (1998) argued that a performance paradigm should stand alongside a textual paradigm. Working toward Conquergood’s suggestion, performance scholars such as Calafell (2009) and rhetoricians such as Pezzullo (2003) have worked to create bridges between performance studies and critical rhetoric. A performance paradigm can open up how we understand knowledge, representation, and theory in a rhetorical paradigm by challenging the textual bias of rhetoric (Calafell, 2009), and the political functions of performance paradigm and personal narratives bring up critical rhetoric as a radical perspective to approach text and context in this dissertation project. Michael McGee (1990) argues that contemporary
rhetorical criticism treats the finished discourse as a final choice from possible arguments and presupposes that criticism is “purposive” and “tendentious” (p. 274). McGee (1990) further points out that the practice of criticism should be self-justifying and a critic should be familiar with the theories of those who write about criticism rather than understand the nature of the rhetorical in human life. Therefore, McGee (1990) suggests that McKerrow’s (1989, 1991) term of “critical rhetoric” provides an emphasis on rhetorical practice, reflecting to the concept of “rhetoric is what rhetoricians do” (McGee, 1990, p. 275).

The purpose of critical rhetoric is to focus on “the dimensions of domination and freedom because they are exercised in a relativized world” and are brought into discussion from practical perspective (McKerrow, 1989, p. 91). The critique of domination concerns “the discourse of power which creates and sustains the social practices control[ing] the dominated” and this is a critique of ideologies, perceived as rhetorical creations (McKerrow, 1989, p. 92). The critic’s task in the critique of domination is to discover the ways that subjects are unjustly dominated by systems of power and to help subjects liberating from the domination (Ono & Sloop, 1992). On the other hand, the critique of freedom needs to be practiced because it is “one of never ending skepticism [and a] permanent criticism” (McKerrow, 1989, p. 96). In other words, the critique of freedom creates a critical stance of skepticism (Ono & Sloop, 1992). Overall, the critique of domination refers the freedom from powers of oppression while the critique of freedom points out the freedom to trace other power relations (McKerrow, 1989, 1991).
Ono and Sloop (1992) extend the discussion in the problem of polarization of these two critiques can be explained by rhetoricians in two opposed ways. They suggest that a critic should see power as a force which flows, circulates, and defines relationships among subjects, and both domination and freedom will be served as two sides of power. From McKerrow’s (1989) perspective, the critique of domination answers the oppression of power, and the critique of freedom engages in a self-reflexivity of writing and thinking. Ono and Sloop (1992) further express that the unity of domination and freedom can encourage rhetorical critic to construct the world in a new way and to replace the binaries. Therefore, a critical rhetoric project should not only pay attention on the oppressive group dominated by institutional power, but should also make personal political to figure out the “possible errors” from human beings (Ono & Sloop, 1992, p. 51). In other words, a critical rhetoric project should create the possibility space for the subject as the body of the effects of social practices (McKerrow, 1993).

Both McGee (1990) and McKerrow (1989, 1993) have mentioned performance is an important aspect in critical rhetoric project. Through arguing McGee’s “rhetoricians are performers,” McKerrow (1989) indicates the act of performance shifts the focus from criticism as method to critique as practice. McGee (1990) points out ancient Greek and Roman rhetoricians possessing performative skill to play as eloquent speakers or great authors. He further argues that if we see rhetoric as a master term, we will notice that “rhetors make discourses from pieces of evidence” (p. 279). The concept of critical rhetoric implicates that texts are understood to be the larger than the finished discourse presenting itself as transparent while the rhetor knows that discourse joins its utility in the
world, inviting its own critique (McGee, 1990). Therefore, both McGee (1990) and McKerrow (1991) agree that a critical rhetoric project can help one to make sense out of the pastiche of discourses which not only build up our experience but also explain the influence and meaning to us in terms of performance and the perspective of critic’s text as fragments. A critical rhetoric project can be seen as a transformative practice, but the project leaves a question as to who is engaging in the performance as a critic (McKerrow, 1993). In order to explore this question, the discussion of the body as performer (McKerrow, 1993) from a performance paradigm (Conquergood, 1988, 1991) provides a valuable explanation for the practice of critical rhetoric.

McKerrow (1993) asks, “If critique is performance, is the body alone sufficient as performer?” (p. 52) Because contemporary theory resituates the body as co-performer, McKerrow (1993) makes arguments through Conquergood’s (1991) work that the body’s potentiality is assigned to a place in ethnography as an observer, but the body is not always situated as a physical agent. Conquergood (1991) points out that ethnography should be treated as the “embodied practice” (p. 180) because it “shifts the emphasis from space to time, from sight and vision to sound and voice, from text to performance, from authority to vulnerability” (p. 183). In this case, performance ethnography turns our attention toward how bodies and voices are situated in contexts of “time, place, and history” (p. 187). More importantly, the performative turn moves researchers and research toward a relationship of embodied “intimate involvement and engagement of co-activity or co-performance with historically situated, which is named unique individuals” (p. 187). Nevertheless, the performance paradigm guides us to pay attention to how texts
can be created, communicated, and critiqued on multiple levels (Conquergood, 1991).

Integrating with Conquergood’s intervention of the performance paradigm, McKerrow (1993) argues that the body in a critical rhetoric project as present within anthropological space interacts and intersects with others occupying the space. Eventually, the body of the observer, as a researcher in a critical project, joins in the creation of meaning when the interpretation is of a person commenting and critiquing from within, not just an outsider looking in (McKerrow, 1993).

**Performing the personal within the organizational: Challenging the textual bias of rhetoric.** Textual analysis, such as critical discourse analysis, provides a method couched within a larger perspective that primarily focuses on the way social power and dominance are presented, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in social and political contexts (van Dijk, 2001). Fairclough (2003) argues that ideology is representations of the world which can be shown to contribute maintaining social relations of power. When examining texts for ideology, a critic must realize “what is ‘said’ in a text always rests upon ‘unsaid’ assumptions” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 11) because ideology is capable of sustaining power relations directly and indirectly. Within discourse, ideology operates persuasively when “speakers want to change the mind of the recipients in a way that is consistent with their beliefs, intentions, and goals” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 263). Managing the mind of others is an essential function of text and talk (van Dijk, 1993), and all levels and structures of context, text, and talk can be more or less controlled by powerful speakers and/or groups (van Dijk, 2001). Therefore, textual analysis considers talk and mediated discourse to be “consequential” and to have effect of human beings (Nothstine,
Blair, & Copeland, 2003). In the process of critiquing and analyzing, text is in relation to the past, present, and with or to audiences, and researchers occupy a location within and among various social-cultural networks (Nothstine et al., 2003). In other words, researchers should be responsive to the concerns and well being of the communities in informed and thoughtful way (Nothstine, et al., 2003). Hart (2003, pp. 71-72) also states:

Because all criticism is autobiographical, I have no choice but to respond personally when trying to answer such hard questions…Rhetoric [studies] how people use language to narrow the policy options of others…Criticism is not something I do; it is something I am… I am a critic because I feel that rhetoric should open and not close the public sphere, that it should make people generous and not craven.

As researchers and critics, we are no doubt performers. Conquergood (1991) argues that the linguistic and textualist bias of communication field blind “the preeminently rhetorical nature of cultural performance” (p. 188). This echoes McGee’s (1990) concern for criticism constantly treating “finished” discourse as a final choice. Conquergood (1992) further points out that “ethnographers share with sophists a commitment to particular practices, pluralism, unpredictability, local performances, playfulness, spatial/topical mobility, provisional and partial truths” (p. 82). Through a performance lens, a text is “suited to unveil the hidden and convoluted processes of power, discourse, and materiality because of the consequences that emerge on the sites and interstices of bodies performing on the borders” (Madison, 2006, p. 347), and it opens a space to discuss “the performance of possibilities” (Madison, 1998):

In a performance of possibilities, I see the “possible” as suggesting a movement culminating in creation and change. It is the active, creative work that weaves the life of the mind with being mindful of life, of “merging text and world,” of critically traversing the margin and the center, and of opening more and different paths for enlivening relations and spaces… The performance of possibilities
centers on the principles of transformation and transgression, dialogue and interrogation, as well as acceptance and imagination to build world that are possible (pp. 277-278).

Eventually, the performance of possibilities explores performative writing as evocative, metonymic, subjective, and citational (Pollock, 1998b). Performative writing is also a way to approach lived experiences and iconic moments of the complexities of human life, which are “no separation between mind and body, objective and subjective, cognitive and affective” (Pelias, 2005, p. 418). Madison (1999) writes up the relationship between performance and theory and argues:

Performance helps me live a truth while theory helps me name it—or maybe it is the other way around. My mind and body are locked together in a nice little divine kind of unity: the theory knows and feels, and the performance feels and unlearns. I know I am a un/learning body in the process of feeling (p. 109).

Therefore, the performance of possibilities creates a space for scholars to challenge the linguistic and textual bias of rhetorical analysis, and the possibilities direct theoretical commitments toward theory building as a point of social change whether it is on the page or the stage (Calafell, 2009).

Overall, rhetorical analysis is consequential, as performative writing, because it is challenged by reflexive engagement making writing subject as a visible, vulnerable, and displaceable to its own critique and its capacity for political/ethical agency (Pollock, 1998b). As Pollock (1998b) describes:

performative rhetorics are performative to the extent that they operate from within circuitries of reader response. The realities they project assume negotiation. They involve the reader not as the subject/object of persuasion of a given reality claim but as a cowriter, co-constituent of an uncertain, provisional, normative practice (p. 95).
Scholars, such as Calafell (2009), Conquergood (1991, 1992, 2002), and Ono and Sloop (1995), have also acknowledged the need to challenge how researchers traditionally treat texts and knowledge production altogether. Conquergood (1991) elaborates that the linguistic and textualist bias of speech communication has blinded many scholars to the preeminently rhetorical nature of cultural performance [such as] ritual, ceremony, celebration, festival, parade, pageant, feast, and so forth (p. 188).

He further argues:

For many people throughout the world, however, particularly subaltern groups, texts are often inaccessible, or threatening, charged with the regulatory powers of the state. More often than not, subordinate people experience texts and the bureaucracy of literacy as instruments of control and displacements…we [have to] pay attention to messages that are coded and encrypted; to indirect, nonverbal, and extralinguistic modes of communication where subversive meanings and utopian yearnings can be sheltered and shielded from surveillance (Conquergood, 2002, pp. 147-148).

What Conquergood argues is not to replace the textual paradigm; instead he considers how a performance paradigm can give more authority and credence to the knowledge produced by marginalized communities. It should stand alongside a textual paradigm. In sum, these performance scholars who “give critical attention to questions of voice, reflexivity, and agency” and concern “Other types of texts and knowledge production” toward “the politics of the personal voice and Other forms of theorizing” (Calafell, 2009, p. 115) articulate performance and rhetoric together and challenge the methodological textual bias in rhetorical studies. This challenge may even also be able to bring a new perspective to study the world of professional in an unconventional way.

Pacanowsky and Trujillo (1983) discuss organizational communication as a socio-construction process should be treated as the notion of communicative performance. This
socio-construction process includes specific symbols, stories, metaphors, and ideologies with particular displays and performances. They further argue that communication in an organizational site is a “culture performance” (p. 129) because it brings the meaning of structural form into organizations. Therefore, organizational performances are dialogically “interactional” and are embodied in the reality that organizational members bring to completion (p. 131). Nevertheless, scholars start arguing that organizational communication discipline has hugely neglected the physical and material body and environment (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Cheney and Ashcraft (2007) state:

If the potential of a communicative voice to inform the professional is to be realized, this disciplined oversight requires attention…[C]ommunication’s material neglect is conceivable as an impulse of self-preservation, a form of disciplinary advocacy. When [organizational] members of the discipline sought to establish and legitimize themselves, especially in the latter half of the 20th century, they became dedicated to the power of the symbolic, which itself had been largely undervalued in both philosophy and the social science (p. 153).

Furthermore, Deetz’s (2001) four theoretical approaches to study discourse in organizational communication guide researchers to create an integrating perspective to rethink organizational communication studies as a field. First, the interpretive studies approach discourse to express how social realities are constructed through everyday life while paying attention to the connection between the site and voice. Meanwhile, critical discourse studies challenge ideology domination and distorted communication in organizational environment as a site, while dialogical perspective deals with same struggle by focusing on micropolitical processes and power relations in organizations. Finally, dialogical studies reveal the partial reality and complexity in organizational environment and pay attention to how marginalized and suppressed people continually
transform the space from their own voices. Scholars of organizational communication
studies indicate the relevant research interests and concentrations in different time
frames, and the questions reveals that how organizational members embody practices in
the sites of everyday life to create a meaningful life, and how researchers situate these
practices and meanings to (re)present organizational, social, and cultural phenomenon.
Hence, critical methodologies, such as performance ethnography, personal narratives,
performative writing, and critical rhetoric, provide “a world of possibility” (Calafell,
2009, p. 112) for studying organizational communication because these methods all focus
on embodying aspects of ethnographic description and are the “practice of engagement
that allows performers, subjects, and audiences to come to an experiential sense of the

Above, I have demonstrated how the connection between performance
ethnography, personal narrative, and critical rhetoric provides an important
methodological framework for studying the embodied experiences of Taiwanese
commercial airline pilots’ professional identity within organizations. This methodological
framework challenges the textual bias of rhetorical studies and reveals a chance for
locating power in a broader personal, social, structural, and cultural perspective. In the
next section, I turn to the discussion of my research design, procedure and the plan of
data analysis.

Research Design, Procedure and Data Analysis Plan

The goal of this dissertation project is to disclose the discursive meanings
embodied within Taiwanese commercial airline pilots’ narratives of their personal and
professional identities rather than provide specific and concrete answers. Geertz (1973) argues that the interpretations of qualitative research are rooted “from forms of learning or discovering” (p. 92). Therefore, this research proposal intends to conduct ethnographic or unstructured interview for data collection (Lindolf & Taylor, 2002) informed by a performance paradigm (Madison, 2005). As Rubin and Rubin (1995) describe, interviewing is a hallmark experience of field work research. Madison (2005) explains that the ethnographic interview provides realm of meaning that permeate beyond rote information or finding the truth of the matter. The ethnographic interview should also “emphasize the living communication of felt-sensing, embodies interplay, and engagement between human beings” (p. 14). Madison (2005) further indicates that ethnographic interviews may involve the following forms: personal narrative and topical interview. Personal narrative is “an individual perspective and expression of an event, experience, or points of view” while topical interview provides a particular subject for points of view, such as an issue or a process (p. 26). Madison argues that these forms do not independently exist and can cooperate with each other. These two forms of ethnographic interviews are justified as the methodological choice for this dissertation project. Through conducting the topical interview, Taiwanese commercial airline pilots will create their own personal narratives of how they perform their job as professional through their everyday life experience. Therefore, my strategy is to frame the ethnographic interviews in this dissertation project as a whole with relatively broader questions about whatever story the narrator wants to tell about the issue at hand (Chase, 1995, 2008). This strategy may not only help my interviewees play an active rather than
passive role in the qualitative research (Rubin & Rubin, 1985), but also allow me to draw upcoming subjects to construct discursive knowledge through embodiment of dialogues.

The relationship between me, as a researcher, and the interviewees indeed creates an ethical dilemma within this qualitative ethnographic research that need to be paid attention. Goodall (2000) has mentioned that “ethnography has to be appropriate with Others’ cultures, performance, life histories” for academic purpose (p. 110). Alexander (1999) further points out that the goal of ethnography to learn from the Other can be problematic because it is often pathologizing. It is important for me to be reflexive while speaking for the Other and to “acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects” (Madison, 2005, p. 7). Reflexivity further creates “an accountability for one’s research paradigms, our own positions of authority, and our own moral responsibility to representation and interpretation” (Madison, 2005, p. 7). Therefore, I will take the stance to reiterate my intention in this dissertation project is not to speak for my interviewees. Rather, I intend to provide a space for their voices to be heard.

There are some research procedures relating to ethical issue in order to respect the subjects in this dissertation project. I was required to obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Denver in order to mark this research as minimal risk. To ensure the minimal risk of this research, all participants were kept anonymous to protect their identities. Once the interview process finished, I transcribed all interview data by myself. Both tape recordings and interview notes of all meetings are kept in the safe place where I am the only person who has access to them. After receiving
approval from DU IRB in May 2012, I began to identify participants. I am personally friends with two Taiwanese commercial airline pilots, and I have been open and transparent to disclose my research interests with them. Using snowball sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981), I introduced this research project to my pilots’ friends and encourage them to pass the information about this ethnographic interviewing research to their colleagues and ask for some other pilots’ permission for recruiting. I set the following criteria for potential participants. Interviewees need to identify themselves as Taiwanese, nationality speaking, and work for commercial airline as pilots in Taiwan. They must be either in the rank of captain or first officer. Meanwhile, Taiwanese commercial airline pilots come from different fields before they enter the field of civil aviation. Some of them are retired Taiwanese Air Force officers. Some of them join either company cadet program or flying school. Therefore, I expected to interview pilots, who have different background before they work for commercial airline. Since more women have joined to work as commercial airline pilots, I also expected to include female participants in this dissertation project. In terms of language use, the ethnographic interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese although this dissertation project is designed and written in English. I planned to meet with each participant approximately 60 to 90 minutes. At the beginning of each meeting, I obtained informed consent. Participants chose whether to be audio-recorded or not. If participants did not want to be audio-taped during interview, I would take notes to highlight the content of interview. Initially, I plan to recruit five to ten participants, but only three interviews have been conducted in between September and December 2012. Within these three participants,
only one pilot agreed to be audio-taped during meeting. I will discuss some of these challenges in my conclusion of this project.

During the meeting with participants, I saw myself as an interviewer in a partnership with my interviewees to help them create memory, meanings, and experience together (Madison, 2005). Goodall (2000) has mentioned that verbal exchange exists in the situation of “phatic communion,” “ordinary conversation,” “skilled conversation,” “personal narratives,” and “dialogue” (pp. 102-104). The verbal exchanges can also be marked by “self-disclosure” when interviewees “explain or retell pivotal events” (Goodall, 2000, p. 104). Therefore, an interactive mode between researcher and interviewee was adopted to help participants create their personal narratives (Peterson & Langellier, 1997) during the interview process. Prompt questions were asked to help participants create their own personal narratives during the meeting with participants. The interview was left more to the agency of the participants and may or may not have included all of the questions and may also have answered other questions outside this list. Therefore, the order of these questions was the general plan, and may have changed to let the interview process flow naturally. The interview was more of a casual conversation with the interviewee being the primary participant within the conversation. I also asked “aid” questions to help participants facilitate their thoughts, such as, “Would you mind to share more details about this?” or “Do you have a story going with this?

1. Can you describe your background before and after you work for commercial airline?

2. Why did you decide to be a commercial airline pilot?
3. Judging from your everyday experience, do you consider commercial airline pilots as professional?

4. Do you consider impressions of commercial airline pilots from general public help you construct professionalism as a commercial airline pilot? Why or Why not?

5. What does professional mean to you?

6. Do you consider certain rules and regulations related to your job set by company managements help you construct professionalism as a commercial airline pilot? Why or Why not?

In terms of data analysis plan, one audio-recording was transcribed to Chinese first and is further translated to English. Other interview notes have been translated to English as well. I organized participants’ personal narratives through poetic transcription, inspired by Madison (1999), and I reflexively and performatively brought my own positionality to bear. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, performative writing is a discursive practice and an intervention into routine representations of everyday life and is evocative, metonymic, subjective, citational, and consequential (Pollock, 1998b). Madison and Hamera (2006) point out that these six excursions into performative writing are well placed into “the complexities of setting bodies and theories in motion into language” (p. xxii). In order to make the writing like Pollock suggests, I first organized participants’ personal narratives through synthesizing repetitive concepts participants mention to capture common ways of discursive practice. This strategy echoes what Madison (2005) suggests, that “coding and logging data is the process of grouping
together themes and categories that you have accumulated” (p. 36). I also paid close attention to how participants’ spoke for themselves in vocal presentation through poetic transcription. In other words, forcefulness, referring to “vocal inflection, volume, or dramatic pause” (Owen, 1984, p. 275), can actually be the performative cues to seek resonance between speakers and readers.

The result of data analysis I present in next chapter of this dissertation project is not the objective and/or universal understanding of theory proving. Rather, it is personal subjective experiences either explicitly or implicitly to challenge the existing literatures or mainstream common sense. Therefore, I expect the embodied intersubjective interaction can create a space of possibility where participant, story, and audience are placed into dialogues to create an ethical way toward cultural understanding (Conquergood, 1985). The result of data analysis may also “resist conclusions [because] it is intensely committed to keeping the dialogue between performer and text open and ongoing” (Conquergood, 1985, p. 9). My own positionality as the general public outside of commercial airline pilots’ professional practices also contributes partial knowledge to my writing and analyzing. I put myself into a dialogue with participants in this dissertation project and minimize the distance between researcher and the Other in order to co-construct the discursive meaning of professional identity.

Summary

In this chapter, I present performance paradigm, personal narratives, and critical rhetoric as theory and method. As Alexander (2005) describes, performance theories and practices have claimed the social and political goals to employ performance as a tool and
method of cultural awareness and social change. Therefore, I draw attention to the link between ethnography and performance possibilities in order to comprehend and recognize the deeper significance of performance. I also connect performance ethnography with personal narratives to argue narrative is both a making and a doing, embodied in discursive communication practices by situational and material conditions, and produced or reproduced to critique existing relations of power and knowledge (Peterson & Langellier, 2006). Since the function of performance narrative reveals the power relationship, I bring critical rhetoric into conversation. Because the purpose of critical rhetoric is to focus on “the dimensions of domination and freedom as they are exercised in a relativized world” (McKerrow, 1989, p. 91), blending critical rhetoric with performance narratives provides a fresh look and challenges the textual bias of organizational rhetoric studies. In addition to these theory and method choices, I described the overall research design and procedure, including the selection of ethnographic interview participants and data collection process. I also proposed the interviewing questions and explained the data analysis plan. In the next chapter, I present the result of data analysis by constructing participants’ personal narratives.
Chapter Four: Performing Pilots’ Professional Identities through Personal Narratives

“I never really imagined that I would be able to fly the Boeing 747-400 in my commercial flying career. When I was in the flying school in the United States, I was excited to see the Dash8 at the airport of flying school. I often thought, ‘Wow, that plane (Dash8) is huge.’”

--Captain A, Personal Communication, September 17, 2012

“Sometimes we only have a very short time to make the decision and solve the problem in the cockpit up in the air, but company management takes a very close look of our decisions and actions in cockpit to judge whether we follow the rule(s) or not. If not, we might get disciplined.”

--Captain C, Personal Communication, December 22, 2012

Meeting with Participants

I have known Captain A\(^5\) for over ten years. We first communicated with each other through an online aviation discussion board on one of the Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) in Taiwan. He was the coordinator of the board, and I was just a lurker at first. Later I turned into a regular poster. I had such a good impression of him because he would always answer my questions related to his job. Surprisingly, we never met each other outside the virtual world, but we managed to keep our friendship back and forth through the online community. After I received the DU IRB’s approval for my research, I contacted him by sending a Facebook message to ask about the possibility of conducting an interview with him. In my message, I summarized my research to give him a general idea of my study. Knowing that a pilot’s schedule is not concrete sometimes, I did not

\(^5\) In order to keep confidentiality, I assigned code names to replace participants’ identities.
really expect him to reply so quickly. In just an hour after I sent the message, he replied
and said that he would be in Taiwan for a week and was happy to meet with me. Since he
had to take care of his children while he was not on duty, I told him to select the place
and the time that was convenient for him.

My interview with Captain A took place on September 17th, 2012 at 10 a.m. Captain A picked the place, which was a Starbucks coffee shop in Keelung, the harbor
city in Northern Taiwan. I arrived at Starbucks 30 minutes before our meeting in order to
make sure that we would have a spot for our session. Around 10 a.m., I got Captain A’s
phone call. He asked if I was in the coffee shop already and wanted to buy me a coffee. I
thanked him but said that I have already got myself a cup of coffee and found a spot.
When Captain A showed up in front of me, he smiled at me and said, “You look like
photos you post on Facebook.” It was odd at the beginning of our meeting, but we
managed to start our “casual talk” naturally before the interview. Captain A talked about
his previous flight from Anchorage to Taipei and asked me what airlines I took for this
trip. He told me that the reason he picked up this Starbucks was because customer traffic
was usually slow in the morning hours. Therefore, he thought it would be great for our
meeting. He also asked me when I will be finished with my Ph.D as he thought I have
been in the United States for a very long time. I felt I would be able to learn a lot from
him through our meeting.

Before we started the meeting, I pulled out the informed consent form in both
Chinese and English. I briefly summarized my research and explained to Captain A about
the required procedures of collecting data. I told him our interview was more like a
“conversation.” However, if he felt uncomfortable about answering any question, he had every right to not provide an answer. He read and signed the informed consent form in English and agreed to be audio-taped. Then, he dropped the line, “This should be interesting.” All of these activities were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere, which I considered a big help for our meeting.

During the interview, Captain A did not reject any of the questions I proposed to him, although he would talk in a relatively low voice when he mentioned some semi-sensitive information regarding his company. I considered how the “site” we chose to do the interview in might play an important role to his behavior. Starbucks coffee shop is a public space. Even though there were not many customers inside the store, Captain A might still have concerns about some stories he would like to share with me. In fact, he specifically asked me to not audio-record one “example” because he explained that this example is still under investigation.

One thing is worth highlighting here. My interview to Captain A was conducted in Mandarin Chinese while sometimes both of us would use English to chat. During the interview, sometimes I had to interrupt Captain A for his clarification and translation about a few professional terms in both Chinese and English in order to make sure that I did not misunderstand or just purely did not get it.

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After I interviewed Captain A, I was supposed to have another meeting with a First Officer (F/O) in the same week. Unfortunately, this FO was called to substitute for flying duty the day before our meeting. The FO did relay the information of my call for
participants to his other colleagues and told me that he would help me to locate other
participants. Later, I received an email from this FO, and he told me that there were two
captains willing to be interviewed. He also sent me those captains’ contact information. I
sent out two emails to both Captain B and C to explain my study and asked for their
permission to interview them. Both of them agreed to meet with me. I also asked them to
select the time and place for our meetings.

Captain B contacted me again few weeks later to arrange the details for our meet
up. He selected a Starbucks coffee shop in Taipei City. My meeting with him took place
on December 20th, 2012 at 3 p.m. Captain B was already inside the store when I got there.
He did not have any drink yet; therefore, I offered to buy him a cup of coffee as a sign of
appreciation for his time. Before we started our interview, Captain B and I had “casual
talk.” He did ask my age and how long I have been in graduate school. When I told him
my age, he smiled at me and said, “I am only ___ years older than you." Captain B looks
young, in my opinion. He told me that he was just promoted to Captain within a year.

I explained to Captain B about my study and asked him to read and sign the
informed consent form. He read through it and told me that he did not want to be audio-
taped if that was okay with me. I was shocked by his request. I told him that this
dissertation study is under protection by DU IRB, and I have to abide the rules to keep
participants’ confidentiality. He explained to me his concerns regarding how the
company’s management might not be happy if they found out this meeting. Since Captain
B did not agree to be audio-taped, I could only take notes during the interview. Besides

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6 In this study, I did not investigate participants’ demographic data. Therefore, I decide to not reveal the
specific age difference between Captain B and myself.
this request, Captain B was very nice and willing to answer every question I proposed to him. Based my observation, I found Captain B was very careful with words and sentences he chose to answer my questions. Also, he brought up his own flying experiences to explain some concepts rather than discussing his company’s policies, which is intriguing to me.

***

Captain C was the last participant I interviewed for this dissertation study. As usual, I asked him to select the place and time for our meeting. He picked a teahouse\(^7\) in Taipei City, offered some time slots for me to choose, and we then set up our meeting for December 22\(^{nd}\), 2012 at 1 p.m. It was Saturday afternoon, and the teahouse was packed. We both arrived at the same time, and Captain C asked me if I had my lunch already. In fact, I was not hungry since I had my breakfast late on that morning. Therefore, I only got myself a hot drink, and Captain C got a lunch box. While I tried to pay for both of our orders, Captain C insisted that I should not pay for his lunch.

While Captain C started his lunch, he asked for more details about my research. He was very interested in why I focused on commercial airline pilots. I explained partially because I am an aviation fan and have always been intrigued by what pilots do behind the cockpit door. He laughed and said, “We fly the plane. That’s it!” He also questioned why a Communication Ph.D. student would do this type of research. I simply answered, “I blend theory and everyday life together to learn human communicative

\(^7\) The teahouse (restaurant) is a popular site in Taiwan. Varied by stores, the teahouse usually serves non-alcohol drinks, refreshments, and full meal in lunch and dinner time. The price is affordable, and customers usually get variety of meal and drink choices.
activities.” It seemed as if Captain C wanted to know me more before our interview get started.

As usual, I brought the informed consent form in both Chinese and English for Captain C to read and sign. While he read the form, I explained the interview procedures and told him that he could opt out to answer some questions he would not want to discuss. He signed the consent form, but chose not to be audio-taped for the whole interview. Again, I was stunned by his decision. I told him, “You are not the first pilot who does not want to be recorded. Would you mind telling me why you don’t want to be taped?” Captain C raised his concern regarding the confidentiality. I told him that this study is approved and under-protected by DU IRB. Confidentiality is assured, and he should not worry about this. Unfortunately, Captain C was still not willing to be recorded. Therefore, I would only be able to take notes for the interview. There were a few small questions Captain C did not want to dig into or provide more in-depth answers for. I also had the impression that he phrased his answer very carefully to let me understand what he really meant. However, he also provided me very detailed answers regarding professional terms pilots constantly use in the job site.

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In the next section, I use poetic transcription, inspired from works of Madison (1993, 1994, 1999) and Calafell (2004), to present the participants’ personal narratives from interviews. Madison (1993) points out that poetic transcription makes words alive with sounds that condition their meanings. By placing words on a page to resemble the rhythm of the human voice and the speaker as a social-historical being that colors each word based on existential fact, the text comes
closer in capturing the depth inherent in the indigenous performance of…speech (pp. 216-217).

Calafell (2004) also indicates that poetic transcription “privileges orality and specific speech patterns” and “embodies through words the importance of the gestures and meanings that are said and performed in interviews” (p. 179). Madison (1994) further argues, “In poetic form, words are not in isolation from movement, sound, and sensory body that give them substance. Words are not placed on a page in blocks of prose divorcing them from the actions and meanings of their speaker” (p. 46). Therefore, the poetic text not only embraces the personal utterances of performer but also reassures ownership of speakers’ words (Madison, 1994; Calafell, 2004). Overall, by using poetic transcription to present participants’ personal narratives, I highlight how Taiwanese commercial airline pilots speak for themselves in terms of choice of words, meaning in language and vocal presentation in order to construct the discursive meaning of pilots’ professional identities.

Performing Professional Identities: Pilots’ Narratives

**It takes a lot to become a commercial airline pilot.** In the beginning of each interview, I asked three pilots to briefly tell me about their background information before and after joining the commercial airline. Captain A provided the most vivid accounts detailing his career as a commercial airline pilot among the other pilots I had meetings with. Through the narratives, pilots create and reproduce their sense of self—how and why they become a commercial airline pilots. Below is Captain A’s narratives of his journey to be a commercial airline pilot (Personal Communication, September 17, 2012).
I majored in physical therapy in college. After I graduated from college, I did military service in the Air Traffic Control Wing of the Air Force. We always joked around that doing military service wastes time and life. While I was in the military, I started reading books about air traffic control and aeronautical information publication (AIP). After reading these books and documents, I got interested in flying and talked to some officers who used to be air force pilots in my squad for their advices. My first thought was to join the air force pilot cadet program, but officers did not recommend. They said that there was no future if I took this approach. They also told me that it probably will be better to learn flying abroad. I was curious why not joining the airlines cadet program. However, joining airlines cadet program requires a 20 year contract after finishing training. Those officers asked me, “Do you want it?”

After I discharged from military, I went to learn flying in the United States for one year. It was few years before September 11, and I could either apply for a M1 or J1 visa. The difference between these two visas is that J1 visa allowed you to have an internship after you finish the course and receive a commercial pilot license (CPL). You can apply for being certified flight instructor (CFI) for the internship and continue to credit flying hours and experiences while teaching. Therefore, you reduce your cost, and you may have a higher chance to get hired by commercial airlines.

But, you did not apply for internship. Rather, you came back to Taiwan after received the CPL and started working in commercial airlines, right?

That’s right! In fact, for those of us who went abroad studying flying and got CPL, we could only get into regional airlines in Taiwan.

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8 Male citizens are required to finish military service in Taiwan.
because China Airlines and Eva Air did not accept applicants holding CPL at that moment.
I joined Formosa Airlines⁹ and started my commercial airline pilot’s career.
I was very lucky
not because I was the last group of CPL pilots Formosa recruited,
but because I was assigned to Fokker50 fleet as a first officer.
Fokker50 was a 50-seat turbo-prop plane.
It was a perfect plane for domestic flight in Taiwan
since most flights were less than an hour.
Our flying pattern a day in Fokker50 was like —
We started the first leg
from Taipei to Taichung,
from Taichung to Kaohsiung,
from Kaohsiung to Hualien and returning to Kaohsiung,
from Kaohsiung to Taichung,
and
back to Taipei.
Because of these short flights,
I built up my flying experiences and techniques
firmly and well
during my time in Fokker50.
It helped me later
when I transferred to Boeing 737-800 (738) and Boeing 747-400 (744).

My experience is actually similar to pilots in the United States more
because they start to fly turbo-prop plane such as Dash8 or Saab340
and later to regional jet in those regional airlines
to build up their flying experiences and skills.
After few years in those regional carriers,
they may go to large companies, like United or Delta.
It is very important to nurture a commercial airline pilot through this pattern.
I was very lucky
to follow this path in the beginning of my career.
Not every new pilot in Taiwan
can have the chance and experience I had.

Later,
Formosa Airlines was acquired by Mandarin Airlines,
a subsidiary company of China Airlines.
Because of the merger, company decided to reorganize the network.
Mandarin introduced three Boeing 737-800s

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⁹ Formosa Airlines only operated domestic flights in Taiwan. This carrier was acquired by Mandarin Airlines in 1999.
to expand the international regional network.
My original thought was
to keep a stable life flying with Mandarin,
be promoted to captain,
and maybe chief pilot later.
However,
I learned the hard truth later that
positions of senior managers, including chief pilot,
have to be dispatched from the parent company.
That is,
China Airlines.
For example,
when I was in 738, my instructor pilot (IP) was from China Airlines
and was assigned to be the chief pilot of Mandarin Airlines.
I finally realized

This is a company without **hope**!

Some senior pilots in Mandarin also suggested to us **not** to stay in this company.
To be honest with you
and I can tell you because
this is the truth.
They were from China Airlines,
and the reason they came to Mandarin is because they had records –
incidents,
accidents,
or violating rules seriously.
They told us to go a larger company,
such as China Airlines or Eva Air
if
we were capable of.

*That was the main reason you decided to leave Mandarin and joined China Airlines.*

Yes!
After I was hired by China Airlines, I stayed in 738 first.
The reason to stay in 738 was related to my paycheck.
If I went to 744 directly,
I would lose my “type rating”\(^\text{10}\) and have to be retrained again.
If I was retrained,

\(^{10}\)Type rating is an allowance to fly a certain aircraft type requiring additional training beyond the scope of initial license and aircraft class training.
my salary would be downgraded three levels. If I stayed in 738, I could keep my “type rating.” I would also not be limited by the requirement of three years as junior FO. I only needed two courses of simulator training and ten legs of line training. This was one-month training only. I flew 738 in China Airlines for two years and later transferred to fly 744.

*Have you ever thought that you would be a Boeing 747 pilot one day?*

**NEVER!**

I never really imagined I would be able to fly the Boeing 747-400 in my commercial flying career. When I was in the flying school in the United States, I was excited to see the Dash8 at the airport of flying school. I often thought, “Wow, that plane (Dash8) is huge.” Some of my friends who are commercial airline pilots in the United States feel amused by my career path. They cannot believe that I flew from turbo-prop aircraft to 738 in less than five years. Few years later, they were shocked I climbed up to 744 and was promoted to captain. It is almost impossible for an U.S. pilot to have this type of experience.

Captain A’s stories gave me an overview of his career path as a commercial airline pilot. Although his narratives here did not really suggest flying as a “profession” explicitly, his narratives highlighted “a spatial practice” concerning his “everyday tactics” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 115). Captain A’s stories detailed his flying experience and decisions he had made for his career path. From a student learning flying in the United States, to a first officer flying turbo-prop aircraft in a regional airline in Taiwan, finally to a captain responsible for a jumbo jet in top-notch airlines nowadays, his narratives revealed that the construction of his professional identity is a continuous process with the
complex of his flying and working experiences. Employees construct their professional identity in the earliest stages of careers in training, along with skills and expertise development (Kuhn, Golden, Jorgenson, Buzzanell, Berkelaar, Kisselburgh, Kleinman, & Cruz, 2008). In Captain A’s case, he started negotiating his professional identity not only in flying school, but also in the early stage of his commercial flying when he joined his first company. Captain A constituted his professional identities through making sense of his work and infusing the work with values (Kuhn et al., 2008) by setting up an overall goal to be promoted to the chief pilot in his commercial flying career. However, Captain A later mentioned he realized that there is no hope for his first company because the parent company takes control of managerial positions and when other senior pilots also encouraged him to switch to a larger company because it is not a right place to stay for a long term commercial flying career. The formal organizational rule and organizational culture triggered the uncertainty and anxiety of Captain A’s identity (re)production. This reveals that specific events or transitions may strengthen awareness of self doubt and self openness in the construction of self-identity (Alvesson et al., 2008). A similar explanation applies to Captain C when he mentioned that he faced the tough decision whether to stay in military or switch to civil aviation in my interview with him. Although Captain C did not explicitly tell me why he decided to leave military, he expressed that he would not be happy if he stayed in military with the situation surrounding him. Ultimately, he made the decision to join the world of commercial flying. Meanwhile, other colleagues who share same organizational membership also provide arenas for organizational members to create and (re)negotiate work meanings and professional
identities (Kuhn et al., 2008). This provides an interesting reading that the aspect of commercial airline pilots needs to be “nurtured.” Captain A’s narratives explicitly discussed how new pilots should be nurtured by accumulating flying experiences and skills in regional carriers first, but his stories shed light on the fact that “nurturing” also comes from perspectives of senior pilots’ knowledge and suggestions about future career choices and paths. Therefore, new pilots make sense of their work meanings and further construct their professional identities through organizational subcultures and participating in communities and networks of work sites (Kuhn et al., 2008).

Captain A’s narratives not only portrayed a vivid journey of his career as a commercial airline pilot, but also demonstrated the complexity of constructions of professional identities. His narratives suggested that the early construction of pilots’ professional identities is affected by specific events, encounters, or transitions through formal organizational rules and cultures as well as the forms of stress and strain in job sites (Alvesson et al., 2008). In the next section of this chapter, I present three pilots’ narratives to provide a possible space for the discussion of commercial airline pilots’ professionalism. Taking on Cheney and Ashcraft (2007) suggestion, pilots’ narratives provide consequential meanings of symbolic functions of the professional discourses materially and politically. From a communication standpoint, their narratives are also identified to learn the construction of professionalism as a division of labor, claim-to-expert class, and normative-ethical obligation (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Then, I focus on how Taiwanese commercial airline pilots consider their job as professionals, and what they think professional means.
**Professional is knowledge, skill and attitude.** In my interviews with the pilots, we had in-depth discussions about what counts as professional. In contemporary society, professional is constantly referred to as a trendy term and is a taken-for-granted reference by both physical appearance and by spoken and written words (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Therefore, what is professional? Do Taiwanese commercial airline pilots consider their career as professions or just a job? It is worth noting that the pilots provided narratives differently to explain their ideas of being professional. Here is what Captain A told me about being a “professional” commercial airline pilot (Personal Communication, September 17, 2012):

Commercial airlines pilot is

**PROFESSIONAL**

in many ways.

Aviation is a very broad field.
There is general aviation and commercial aviation.
Some pilots fly for recreational *fun*.
Like driving,
we drive our car for personal use.
Some are able to drive cabs.
If you would want to be
a truck driver
or a passenger bus driver,
there are different requirements to pass
before you can obtain the license.
Same rationales apply to commercial airline pilots.
The way we fly and handle situation is very

**different.**
From our angle to see general aviation pilots,
they are

**amateur.**
Even when I look back to see regional flight operations now,
I feel they are amateur in certain ways.
Not that I am saying they are not professional.
My point is
pilots have to keep “climbing up\textsuperscript{11}” in the field of flying.

*It is very interesting to hear what you say about regional flight operations. Do you think maybe it is because you are the captain flying 747 now?*

Not just because I am the captain flying a 747 now. I grew up from regional carrier and flew turbo-prop and 738 before. Requirements are **different** compared between regional flights and long-haul flights. For example, you fly Fokker50 for domestic flights in Taiwan. All you need is **skills** for takeoff and landing. The flight duties are **simple**. You don’t even need to read the Jeppesen Chart. You know how to get from A to B and B to C. If your English is not good, you just communicate with Air Traffic Control (ATC) in Chinese. You gradually memorize all important radio frequencies, runways, headings, and flying courses. It is **a routine work** in your everyday flight operations. It is not even necessary to understand international aviation statutes or rules. You don’t need those because you don’t fly out of Taiwan.

However, it is very different if you fly internationally, especially long-haul flights. Take Los Angeles (LAX) as an example. This is a major entry point to the United States. Only international top notch airlines fly LAX. The level of competition is way more different.

\textsuperscript{11} In the meeting, what Captain A said here in Chinese was, 趁上爬. This is the metaphor referring pilots need to continue learning in order to reach a higher position.
You have to be equipped with
the best understanding of rules, statutes, and skills
because you compete with
top notch airlines,
pilots,
and air traffic controllers.

Even inside the company,
different fleets have cultural and professional differences.
For example,
747 have left Tokyo for three hours
and there is a sick passenger on board.
If we had to divert for medical emergency,
it takes equally three hours back to Tokyo or continues to Hawaii.
There is no place to go
because you are in the middle of nowhere.
The only thing I can do is to speed up
whether we return back or move forward.
However, if medical emergencies happen on a 737 from Taipei to Denpasar
there are numerous alternative airports for diversion en-route.
From the perspective of airplane performance and system,
it is not an urgent situation when a 747 loses one engine,
but a total different meaning for a 737.
Flying different types of airplane
requires different thoughts and strategies to handle
irregular operations.

Captain A’s narratives suggest that the level of professional is different even
though they are all commercial airline pilots. From domestic to international and from
turbo-prop airplane to Boeing 747, commercial flying is a knowledge-based occupation,
and the professional knowledge is abstract and self-expanding (Macdonald, 1995).
Commercial airline pilots are certified and credentialed by relatively high standards and
qualifications, giving pilots the ability to control abstract knowledge and practical flying
skills. This nature requires pilots to continue enhancing their knowledge and skill for
their works. It also reflects to Captain A’s narratives in the previous section of this
chapter that pilots need to be nurtured by working in regional carriers to enhance their
basic practical skills. Once pilots are well-equipped with practical flying skills, they can expand to different levels of working environments and deal with challenges through abstract knowledge in flying. Captain A’s narratives suggest that regional and long-haul flights pilots have different sets of mind and knowledge to manage everyday flight operations. Captain A further explained that pilots have to be not only skillful but also knowledgeable in order to compete with the best players in the worldwide professional system of commercial flying. If pilots did not improve themselves by assimilating necessary knowledge, they would not be able to survive inside the system. That is why flying skills may be generated from the abstract knowledge, such as rules, statutes, and operational manuals, but understanding the abstract knowledge enables survival in the competitive system of professions (Abbott, 1988). Therefore, one of commercial airline pilots’ tasks of being professional is to apply abstract knowledge to solve the problem, granting jurisdictional claim to provide diagnosis, inference, and treatment in the system (Abbott, 1988). Captain B discussed how knowledge and experiences can help pilots to determine weather issues (Personal Communication, December 20, 2012):

Sometimes we may encounter turbulence during flying. Most predictable turbulence is caused by cloud systems. However, the current Doppler Radar on the plane can only detect the activity of moisture not turbulence. Depending on concentration, large, or small, the weather radar shows different color to help pilots make decisions. If the moisture activity was vibrant, there might be turbulence in the front. Although the weather radar may provide pilots for information to avoid the weather, our knowledge and experiences can help to determine
whether it is just heavy moisture or turbulence.
We joke around
that the good pilots take you to the heaven,
and the mediocre pilots take you to ride a roller coaster.
Some senior pilots’ long time experiences
are way more precise than weather radar.

In this narrative, Captain B highlighted the importance of being knowledgeable to handle the weather situation. Although the technology can provide certain help, it goes back to pilots’ knowledge and experiences to avoid weather or eliminate malfunction.

Captain B used a humorous way to describe the situation that “good pilots” will access information through knowledge and take the airplane away from the weather. However, if pilots were not knowledgeable enough to read the information from instruments and to make a judgment call, they might fly the plane directly into turbulence zone. Of course, the plane would shake vibrantly just like riding the roller coaster. Captain A also provided me another bloody example to show how important knowledge is for contemporary flight operations (Personal Communication, September 17, 2012):

Do you remember few years ago
a TransAsia Airways ATR cargo plane crashed into Taiwan Straits
due to the icing issue?
This is the old problem of ATR.
Did they
**NOT**
know about this issue?
Maybe pilots on that flight **never** received the proper training
to deal with icing issue in flying.
If the aircraft showed the character of icing,
you are supposed to descend the airplane.
However,
the cockpit voice recorder (CVR) on that flight revealed that pilots tried to climb up to higher flight levels.
Finally,
the plane lost air speed,
stalled,
and crashed into sea.
When I flew a Fokker50,
I did not know about the icing issue, too.
Our plane would not fly over 15,000 feet.
I only learned about the icing issue
after transferring to a 738.

Being a commercial airline pilot
in earlier years,
we used to fall behind the technology of airplane.
Now, we catch up,
but the technology is more advanced.
That is why the position of Flight Engineer (FE)\(^\text{12}\)
has been removed.
In the old time,
FE would help you monitor the performance of system.
But,
it is computer’s job now.
Therefore,
pilots have to be familiar with
the system and performance of airplane.
When a warning sign shows up on the computer monitor in the cockpit,
pilots have to analyze,
apprehend the meaning behind the warning sign,
and solve the problem in the end.
Computers monitor systems of an airplane,
but it does not eliminate malfunctions for pilots.
That is why
pilots have to be familiar with
the knowledge of system and performance of airplane.
Otherwise, pilots will get themselves into big trouble.

Both Captain A and B’s narratives suggested that being a professional means
embodying knowledge and experiences with skills in their everyday flying. As
commercial airline pilots, work as professional is organized by a classification and an
inferential system of knowledge to keep the jurisdiction formalizing the skills on which

\(^{12}\) The classical airplanes, such as Boeing 727, Boeing 747-100/200/300, or DC-10 have FE in cockpit to handle the performance of airplane system. The digital technology has been implemented into flight operations, and what FE used to do inside the cockpit has been replaced by computer.
The work proceeds (Abbott, 1988). Flying has changed nowadays compared with the pioneer era because contemporary airplanes are equipped with better technology to help pilots. Bennett (2006) indicates that pilots are being disempowered and deskilled because of highly automated glass cockpits nowadays and further argues the implications for the profession that commercial airline pilots are craftsmen or technologists. From both Captain A and B’s stories, I do not feel pilots consider themselves disempowered and deskilled by advanced technologies on the airplanes. Rather, pilots have to learn and understand more about the system and performance of planes because a computer can only assist pilots. Ultimately, pilots make final decisions and solve problems based on information they receive from a computer. It is interesting that all participants I interviewed have mentioned that the general public has the wrong impression about their work because the public does not see how hard commercial airline pilots have to qualify and maintain their ability to fly. Therefore, pilots’ narratives as discourses claim jurisdiction of their profession and ask for the recognition through understanding exclusive rights, such as the control of professional abstract knowledge, training and recruitment (Abbott, 1988).

On the other hand, being professional is not only about knowledge and skill, but also about ethical attitudes of work. Jurisdiction is the link between the profession and its work, and it also refers to responsibility and expresses the professional claim to moral competence (Abbott, 1988; Cheney et al., 2010). Because professions exist as specialties, pilots’ narratives as discourse provide a space to challenge what professions encourage ethical reflection in everyday life and deal with professional identity rather than just
keeping it as a vision such as “just doing my job” or “I only follow company’s protocol.” Cheney et al., (2010) further point out that the combination of professional practice and personal identity becomes the integrity of professionalism. Therefore, “a true professional” considers practical and moral responsibilities beyond the traditionally prescribed the social trusteeship notion of professional responsibility (Cheney et al., 2010, p. 149). In my interviews with three pilots, they all talked about their professional responsibility as commercial airline pilots. Captain A mentioned that his company has a slogan and addressed how this slogan affects his attitude as a professional (Personal Communication, September 17, 2012):

**Safety**
First
Passenger Comfort
Scheduling
Economic

Since the company put safety first, I always worry about accidents. I guess it is probably related to organizational culture. I actually have no problem with the past safety records of the company, but I get to see my colleagues’ cases. For example, if an airplane overshoots the runway after landing. I read the case and think, “What if this happened to me one day?” When a pilot is involved in an accident or incident, it turns to be captain’s responsibility because the captain is the pilot in command (PIC) of the flight. The captain is the leader of the flight and is responsible for the crew and passengers on board.
Captain A discussed his responsibility as a PIC. Not only does the company put the slogan for pilots to follow, but it is his responsibility to take care of the whole airplane.

Captain A further addressed the responsibility also coming from the fear of job security. Pilots involved in accidents would be suspended from flying duty and further investigation. If the accident was caused by pilot’s error, the pilot might get fired. This fear of job security strengthens the pilots’ responsibility embodied through their knowledge and skill. Both Captain B and Captain C highlighted the issue with discussions of saving fuel, and how this action affects their attitudes toward flight operations. The following are Captain B’s narratives (Personal Communication, December 20, 2012):

I know many pilots only follow rules to put fuel-saving as their last concern. Some pilots say that even if I save fuel for the company, I will not get an annual bonus from company. Why bother? However, I keep telling my colleagues that I enjoy saving fuel, and this is always one of the important things I consider in flying.

This is not for the earth. This is not for the company. This is for me.

I don’t want to worry to death during the flight. What if the destination airport closes? What if we go around? What if we have to divert to an alternative airport? I don’t want to see the low fuel signal on. I don’t want to regret that I didn’t save the additional one hundred pounds of fuel. In the meantime, when I can look after safety,
passenger comfort, scheduling, and save fuel altogether, this is not only a huge achievement for me, but also an approval for my professionalism.

Captain C provided the same thought when I asked him about how he deals with the issue of fuel saving. It is not about saving money for company. It is hugely related to his flight operations and his responsibility to the whole plane as a captain (Personal Communication, December 22, 2012):

I save fuel for myself, not for the company. If there were an emergency situation, additional fuel might help me reach the runway.

Because the fuel price is not like 10 or 20 years ago, airlines advance budget and cost control. The company asks us to pump the fuel "precisely" and to choose alternative airports closer to destinations. However, what is the risk for pumping fuel precisely? If the flight operation was normal, everything would be fine. When the flight encounters air traffic control, strong head wind, or bad weather, we may need to use reserve fuel. If we decided to divert due to weather, other flights might divert as well. When the alternative airport is full, I don’t have enough fuel to go to other airports. What should I do?

Overall, I presented three pilots’ narratives to discuss the meaning of being professional as a commercial airline pilot. In my conversations with each pilot, they constructed professionalism as a “claim-to-expert class” and as a “normative-ethical
obligation” (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007, p. 153). They suggested that knowledge is the standpoint of being professional in the field of commercial flying. Being equipped with proper knowledge helps pilots to solve problems, when especially dealing with weather issues or eliminating malfunctioning systems. In the meantime, pilots not only execute their flying duties based on their education and training, but also incorporate them with values and policies of the company in their service (du Gay, 1996). Moreover, the sense of ethical responsibility plays into pilots’ professionalism. All three pilots I interviewed are in the same company, and they mentioned that the company has set safety as the top priority in terms of flight operations. Therefore, the captain as a pilot in command not only follows the company’s policy, but also makes the ultimate decisions to ensure that the flight operation is safe. I put what Captain C said as the final note of this section (Personal Communication, December 22, 2012):

No pilots would intentionally crash the plane.
If the accident happened,
we were on the plane, too.
Being a pilot in command
I would always be the last person to leave the aircraft if an accident happened.

Resistance and dissent. Employee’s dissatisfaction at work is a huge challenge for organizations and has implications for realizing the rights and responsibilities of both company management and employees (Saunder, 1992). Dissent is one form of resistance regarding employee’s voice of disagreement or contradictory opinions in the workplace (Kassing, 1998, 2001, 2001). Organizational members may dissent to their management, coworkers, family or friends external to organizations (Kassing, 1998). In my interviews with three pilots, one of the interview questions triggered them to have an intensive
discussion of resistance. I asked them, “Do they consider certain rules and regulations set by the company’s management impact and affect their construction of professional identities?” Captain C shared this long story regarding his experiences with flight operations during bad weather and his concerns toward company (Personal Communication, December 22, 2012):

In my company, we have a division called Operational Control Center. Operational Control Center is responsible for signing off flight, aircraft, payload, handling emergency situation, etc. The company requires pilots to contact Operational Control Center first if there were irregular operations of the flight. Pilots need to report questions, situations, and what solutions have been used. Then, Operational Control Center should give pilots further instructions. To be honest with you, Operational Control Center **NEVER** gives any instruction when a situation happens. If we keep asking them, they will tell us, “Pilot in command (PIC) makes the final decision” because Operational Control Center do not want to take responsibility.

There were three typhoons hitting Taiwan between summer and autumn a few years ago. When the first and second typhoons came, the company did not cancel any flights. All pilots and other employees worked their asses off to finish each flight operations. When the third typhoon came, that was such a **disaster** for our operations. I was on round-trip flights between Kaohsiung and Japan. When I arrived at Japan that afternoon, we received the flight and weather information. The forecast showed that weather in both Kaohsiung and Taipei were **BAD** and did not meet the minimum requirement for landing. Well, Operational Control Center did not advise the cancellation, and PIC did not have the right to cancel flight. We had to go!
When my flight approached toward Kaohsiung, the weather was still not good. It was in the margin to meet the minimum standard for me to land the plane. We were in the holding pattern for 50 minutes. I asked for the advice from Operational Control Center and got this:

“PIC makes the decision.”

My flight was getting close to the minimum fuel for diversion. I had to divert to Hong Kong. On our way to Hong Kong, we heard from the radio that many of the company’s other flights also headed to Hong Kong. It was such a spectacle… We landed at Hong Kong, and it was just the start of nightmare. We did not know what we should do next.

No one knew actually!

We waited for two hours, and passengers started “going bananas.” We also heard other pilots sharing “the situation on the battlefield.” Operational Control Center still had NO advice at all. We asked for catering, fuel truck, and flying plan. What did we get?

Nothing!

We started worrying about crew overtime problems. The chief pilot’s flight was at Hong Kong as well. He asked everyone to report the deadline for departure. If there was a possibility the working hours and flying hours would exceed the maximum, captain should make decision to finish the flight duty. Operational Control Center still gave us, “PIC makes the decision.” But, I thought PIC has NO authority to cancel the flight?

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13 In the meeting, Captain C said in Chinese “鼓譟” and I asked him what he considered the better translation in English with this phrase. Captain C thought “going banana” is a good way to describe passengers on board with the situation of diversion.
Forecast said both Taipei and Kaohsiung were still under minimum standard of visibility. Should I go under this situation? I had to. After waiting for almost four hours, many diversion flights started heading back to Taiwan. Same thing happened again when we approached to Kaohsiung. I was in the holding pattern again for twenty minutes. Although I still had enough fuel, I would have overtime issues and violate the rule if I did not divert. I contacted the company and told them I would divert to Taipei.

The plane climbed up to almost 20,000 feet. Air traffic control suddenly contacted us that the visibility in Kaohsiung was getting better and met with the required minimum landing standard. Of course, I turned back and landed at Kaohsiung in this typhoon weather. My total working hours were 16 hours on that day. My flying hours were 9 hours 20 minutes. I was in such high pressure during the whole flight duty. This was a dangerous factor to cause pilot’s fatigue and risked flight operation. Where was the Operational Control Center?*

Captain C’s story here suggested that the company did not provide enough support for the frontline employees, especially pilots, when irregular operations happened. In the meantime, Captain C was also not happy when the Operational Control Center was not willing to take responsibility and shifted it to pilots. When I asked him whether he and other pilots have tried to report this situation to higher management, Captain C also mentioned that this has been a long time issue bothering pilots when irregular operations happen. Nevertheless, management seems to have no interest in solving this problem. Captain C was not thrilled with the experience he described to me. He complained that not only might he get punished because of the violation of the
requirement of working and flying hours, but also he worked in such a high pressure environment on that day. What he was concerned about was not just about being punished, but the potential risk of flight safety because of both physical and psychological fatigue.

Kassing (1998, 2001) mentioned that employees apply different strategies to express dissent. Employees use articulated dissent within an organization to influence organizational adjustment openly and effectively. Employees also apply latent dissent to express “their contradictory opinions and disagreements aggressively to ineffectual audiences across the organization or… [other] frustrated employees” (Kassing, 2001, p. 445). Therefore, dissent as the voice of organizational members can be “an attempt to open discussion about issues,” “an active resistance to consent processes” and “opens [the space for] the corporation and individuals to learn through reclaiming differences and conflicts overlooked or suppressed by dominant conceptions and arrangement” (Deetz, 1998, p. 159). Captain A’s narratives demonstrate how pilots resist the company’s flight operation policies, and how pilots negotiate with the company’s management to deal with the unnecessary rules (Personal Communication, September 17, 2012):

Most of the time, pilots can internalize issues of flight operation. The company will always change numerous rules or policies after accidents or incidents happen. To be honest with you, we have enough rules or policies. It just depends on pilots to follow and execute those rules and policies. We may have a hundred policies there, but most of them are not necessary.
I can just tell you this --

Most of policies or rules are **useless**.

We have one very controversial policy regarding flight operation about speed limit. When the airplane is below 10,000 feet, we can only fly 250 nautical miles. For the Boeing 747, especially the trans-Pacific flight, the 250 nautical miles is **not** enough because the airplane is very heavy in the phase of takeoff. Therefore, a high speed is necessary, but violates the company’s policy. In reverse, when the airplane is approaching, the 250 nautical miles limitation usually causes the flow of arrival air traffic. If you are number one to approach, you just block all other planes behind you. Unfortunately, this policy is clearly stated in our Flight Operation Manual (FOM). If air traffic control asks you to go beyond 250, you have to report **“unable”** according to the rule.

*According to the rule? This sounds like a very ambiguous call! Have pilots ever responded to the company’s management in regard to this “useless” policy? What is the answer of the company’s management?*

Of course we are. We have mentioned this issue in the meeting with management numerous times. However, management from the flight operation division does not want to change this policy when they are in charge. They are concerned what if something happened after they changed the policy. Who is going to take the responsibility? It is obvious that management does not want a huge modification of policies. It is fine to add more policies or rules, but management will take very serious consideration to make one policy or rule gone.
Management will always go for conservative route rather than get kicked out from their current positions.

*It is so ironic. I mean the managements in flight operation division are pilots as well. It always baffles me that when employees are promoted to higher positions, they change their thoughts as well.*

Exactly!

“When you change the position, your brain is changed as well!”¹⁴

I am not saying that those in management change to different people. The truth is they see things different from the angle of a management position now. They will only ask pilots to follow. Otherwise, management will have problems to manage pilots.

Remember that I mentioned earlier about the company’s policy – safety first, passenger comfort, scheduling, and economic. Since safety is the priority, company management just don’t want to touch the policy of 250 nautical miles below 10,000 feet.

In my conversation with Captain A, it is very obvious that pilots are not happy with certain policies and rules in terms of flight operations. It is obvious that pilots would share their concerns with management, but management might not take on pilots’ suggestions or concerns. Hence, pilots’ hands are tightened and tied. I also find that it is interesting that Captain A did not clearly mention whether he would follow the 250 nautical miles speed below 10,000 feet in practice. I would assume that pilots would still follow this policy because it is very important to do exactly what FOM requires them to do. Although Gossett and Kilker (2006) argue that an oppositional discourse is provided by organizational member’s concerns to challenge the master narrative from

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¹⁴ In Chinese, we say 搬了位置就換了腦袋.
management, resistance as oppositional practice allows organizational members to voice dissatisfaction and discontent, but also creates the space for exercising autonomy increasing ability to accommodate and survive organizational control (Edwards, Collinson, & Rocca, 1995). This echoes Captain A’s concern about another issue of pilots’ trainings and specific flight operations while he tried to rationalize why management takes this approach to manage pilots (Personal Communication, September 17, 2012):

In each fleet,
we set up a performance index.
Every pilot in the fleet is assigned a number.
We don’t know what number we have.
Only management
can see everyone’s number.
For example,
both captain and FO need to have certain scores in combination
to qualify and pass for the flight duty.
Management monitors some high risks airport
such as Anchorage,
and it is a major stop point
for the company’s 747 cargo flights.
Because of the high operational risk,
there is a high chance for pilots to get FOQA\textsuperscript{15}.
The company’s management has decided that only captains can land airplanes at Anchorage.
Is it an effective way?
Yes!
Numbers can tell.
After this policy was implemented,
the FOQA rate was lower in the 747 fleet.
On the other hand,
pilots started complaining,
especially FOs.

\textsuperscript{15}Flight Operation Quality Assurance (FOQA), also known as Flight Data Monitoring (FDM) or Flight Data Analysis, is a method of capturing, analyzing, or visualizing the data generated by an aircraft moving through the air from one point to another. By using the information from FOQA, it helps improve the flight safety and increase overall operational efficiency.
They worry that if they got promoted to captains they would not have any landing experience in Anchorage. My opinion is that it is related to the flying skills because pilots can learn the same experience through other approach operations in different airports. FOs will learn from their previous experiences, and most captains will share experiences and ideas with FOs. Again, this is a learning process.

There was an assistant who used to say, “It is very easy to manage pilots. Just like whipping the horse, feeling the pain but continuing to thrust forward.” It is normal for pilots to complain about every policy, but the company management only sees the key performance information. Numbers are everything. If a number proves effective and helpful to flight operations, it is hard for management to change their mind. They know pilots will always complain but still execute those policies. From management’s perspective, effective is the most important thing.

Both Captain A and Captain C’s narratives revealed that resistance is a result of the reactivity of subject effects and a discursive practice. Pilots’ resistance is not only a specific and identifiable behavior, but also a complex and contradictory attempt to construct their professional identities (Mumby, 2005). Organizational members would “resort to less visible and less direct forms of workplace confrontation” (Prasad & Prasad, 1998, p. 226), and they would choose to discuss their frustrations with coworkers, friends, or family members rather than to confront directly to management (Gossett & Kilker, 2006). In this case, organizational members would not be able to be threatened to
lose their membership because of opposing the practices of the organizational in the larger system (Gossett & Kliner, 2006). In my conversation with pilots, they have mentioned that it is very hard to resist certain policies of flight operations even if those policies are not really suitable from their perspectives. When policies are written into the FOM, pilots have to carry them out. This is also related to pilots’ professional knowledge and attitude. Once they operate the plane, they have to abide by every public company’s operational policies. Of course, pilots would use humor, irony, and cynicism as discursive strategies to get themselves away from organizational power and control (Fleming & Spicer, 2002, 2003; Hodson, 1995; Prasad & Prasad, 1998). When Captain C mentioned his notorious long working hours experience on the typhoon day, he joked around that his company was always the bravest one, not canceling flight operations in the typhoon day. Captain A also talked about how the company’s management thinks that managing pilots is like managing horses. Pilots understand that sometimes they may just need to “suck it up” even if they are not happy with the company’s management. They also told me that more and more pilots would voice their dissatisfaction through private online forums or Facebook. From a variety of discursive practices, pilots create a space against organizational master narratives and identify resistance while (still) hoping for changes in organizing processes and actions.

Captain A also pointed out that some pilots were more vocal toward the unreasonable or ineffective policies and training, especially in regard to flight operations. They later decided to leave the company. Some of them are currently working in airlines in the Middle East, South Korea, Hong Kong, or China. Captain A talked about that a
captain, nicknamed “The **STAR** of flight operation” by everyone in the company, who finally left the company because he was disappointed with certain decisions from the company’s management after sharing his concerns numerous times. Captain A said that there are certain senior pilots exiting the company in this path after their contracts expired. Hirschman (1970) argues that when organizational members face dissatisfaction, they may choose to either exit or speak out. This decision of exiting or speaking out may affect employees’ loyalty to organizations. However, Hirschman (1970) further points out that speaking out can likely be taken as an early stage of deterioration in organizations, but exiting may be a reaction of “last resort” once speaking out has failed in this process (p. 37). Although none of my participants mentioned that they consider exiting their current company, they implicitly indicate that pilots’ voices were not able to reach higher management or other departments in their company. This lack of respect is one major force driving pilots to finally leave. I use Captain C’s narratives to make a final note for this section (Personal Communication, December 22, 2012):

> No one wants to work in a different country rather than to stay at home. However, we don’t feel **respect**. Even a worm will turn.\(^{16}\)
> More and more pilots chose to leave for a better working environment. The place pilots’ professionalism is **respected**.

**Popular (re)presentation and professionalism.** In my conversations with participants, I mentioned to pilots that we often feel curious about what pilots do behind the cockpit door. Passengers do not have access to the cockpit. Therefore, we observe

\(^{16}\) Captain C’s original phrase in Chinese is 狗急也會跳牆.
pilots from their physical appearances and behaviors in public. It seems like wearing uniforms is an indicator to determine pilots’ professionalism although it sounds shallow. Captain A responded to my question that not only pilots have to follow policies and standard procedures in the FOM, but also some rules and policies related to non-flying matters are set up for pilots, such as wearing uniforms or good behaviors (Personal Communication, September 17, 2012):

_The public always have an image (or stereotype) of pilots, especially when pilots have their uniforms on. Many people consider that wearing a uniform is a glorious way to represent both personal and professional identity. What do you think of this?_

To be honest with you, no one wants to wear uniform. I always joke around that a uniform is costume for acting.

Most 747 pilots enjoy flying cargo flights rather than passenger flights. On passenger flights, we need to have our uniforms on all the time. Because there might be passengers outside if we walk out cockpit for the washroom during flight. When we fly cargo, there is no passenger. Cargos don’t care whether pilots put on uniforms or not. The truth is we need to show good behavior and a positive spirit once we put on uniforms. We don’t eat while walking. Wearing uniforms means we have to “be professional.” Otherwise, publics and passengers, even flight attendants, will have their doubt, “Is this pilot reliable?”

_What you said here intrigued me. Living in the United States now, I constantly see pilots eat and drink coffee while walking around at the airport. It does not seem to bother them or the public._

From a cultural perspective,
we (Taiwan) are extremely different from the United States. Many people are licensed to fly in the United States. Flying is a very normal stuff for people in the US. It is a different situation in Taiwan because we are a small island. Hence, there are **cultural** and **regional** differences. Our culture requires us pay attention to our physical presence because we are representing an image of the company. It is not just for pilots, but for every employee.

Going back to wearing uniforms, The company actually writes certain rules into the manual. Pilots cannot eat while walking. Pilots should wear the hat. Pilots and flight attendants should form a line while walking around the airport. These rules are stated clearly in our manual, and we hardly violate them.

One interesting perspective that Captain A mentioned is the differences in the cultural aspects in the (commercial) flying world between Taiwan and the U.S. He used discourses of difference to highlight that the laboring body is configured, coded, and evaluated through the salient of cultural perception and appraisal of work (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). In Captain A’s narratives, he suggested that being professional for commercial airline pilots does not always refer to their job performance. Being professional also means the appearance and discipline to represent the company’s image and reputation. Captain A also mentioned that wearing a uniform is like wearing a costume for acting, and he and some other pilots do not like it. Ashcraft (2007) points out in her study that the airline pilot uniform serves as an authoritative and fatherly role, and it is a powerful symbol on pilot’s body to represent the professional obligation. Ashcraft’s argument is contradicted by Captain A’s narratives regarding wearing uniform here. I often wonder why he does not like to wear uniform. The reason behind this issue
may probably be because pilots feel pressure from the company. When you put on a uniform, you represent the image of company. Therefore, all your behaviors will be monitored. Being professional does not just focus on job performance, but relates to all external behaviors. Captain B further provided his experience to show how the company considers certain behaviors not allowed when employees communicate with customers (Personal Communication, December 20, 2012):

When I was a newly minty FO, sometimes I had a chance to do passenger announcement (PA). Let’s face it. Even if more people have air travel experiences, it may still be the first time for some people traveling through flying. I always assume that I should give passengers a lot of information. However, management did not agree with the way I conducted the PA. Later, the chief pilot talked to me and suggested to me to avoid “unnecessary” information when I delivered the PA.

*Wow, are you serious? I always enjoy the pilot’s PA. Not only general information, but also some fun facts of flying. They say everything. It seems to me pilots in the US have more freedom to say things in PA. Some of their PAs are really funny, and passengers seem to enjoy them.*

That is about right. I think this is the major difference between Taiwan and the U.S. They hardly set up everything to limit pilots; what they can or cannot do. They actually have more freedom than us. Adversely, we have many protocols to follow, and some of them are not even related to flying.

*Do you think those non-flying protocols are reasonable?*

It is hard to answer. There is nothing right or wrong. Just like my example about the PA, the company later published an example of PA for pilots. The example tells us exactly what we should say.
Although I don’t like it, I can only follow it rather than change it. Now, I am in the position of captain. I can get why company makes these protocols. I believe the public still has many misunderstandings about our job due to the past records in my company. Management doesn’t want to give the public an impression that pilots are not professional. There is indeed an aspect of cultural difference.

“Being professional” is apparently a multi-dimensional task for Taiwanese commercial airline pilots. Both Captain A and Captain B’s narratives suggested that cultural and institutional codes of professional demeanor enforce the vision of national customs and identity (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). For Taiwanese commercial airline pilots, the company sets certain standards for their professional encounters and images. Most of times, these professional encounters and images involve interactions with the public, such as passengers or media. Therefore, popular representations of “being professional” are (re)produced in contrast with the pilots’ job in cockpit (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Ashcraft and Allen’s (2003) reading of the texts depicting an American way of doing business and creating a basic profile of being professional can provide some insight for this phenomenon:

The professional acts with restrained civility and decorum; wears a convincing shell of calmness, objectivity, and impersonality; thinks in abstract, linear, strategic—in a word, “rational”—terms (e.g., the rationality emulated in this article); covers the body in conservative, mainstream attire; keeps bodied processes (e.g., emotionality, sexuality) in check; has a promising, upwardly mobile career track; derives primary identity and fulfillment from occupation and work accomplishments…and so on (p. 27).
Ironically, Ashcraft and Allen’s reading of an American way of doing business is to challenge the domination of performing whiteness and of enacting gender or national identity originally. However, Ashcraft and Allen’s examination provides an intriguing comparison of Taiwanese commercial airline pilots’ narratives that airlines in Taiwan would have protocols to instruct pilots’ “professional” behaviors to fit into popular and cultural representation of “professional” while U.S. based airlines might not consider that it is necessary to regulate pilots’ (even other employees) appearances and certain non-working related behaviors. To be clear, it is not my claim that results I presented here are absolutely answers for all actual practices in the aviation industry. Rather, they reflect the cultural and national expressions of the professional can be in both predictable and unpredictable ways requiring an intersectional examination of discourses while treating professional as a productive nexus or organizing construct (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007).

**Power, fear, and professionalism.** Critical scholars have described that power is a deep structure phenomenon, shaping the ways in which organizational members develop their sense of identity and connect fragmented interests to coherence (Clegg, 1975; Conrad, 1983; Giddens, 1979, 1984; Mumby, 1988). In the meantime, power should not be treated as simple coercion, but as the process through which consensual social relations are articulated within the context of certain meaning systems (Mumby, 1988). Therefore, power is a structured and relational feature of organizational life which not only constructs identity formation but also the disciplining of organizational members. Through my conversations with participants, I find that power usually operates in the hegemonic fashion asserting itself into pilots’ ongoing organizational practices.
everyday and constituting individuals with organizations as subjects. It is also worth noting that participants’ discourses as laboring bodies revealed that power flows in various communicative activities everyday with other employees and the company’s management. Pilots’ professionalism is a political formation that can simultaneously coordinate and deny divisions and hierarchies of labor within the organization (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). In the contemporary world of commercial flying, cooperation between pilots is important, and the spirit of cooperation has also been extended to not only pilots, but also flight attendants. Therefore, commercial airlines apply the training program called crew resource management (CRM) to improve interpersonal communication, leadership, and decision making. Captain A’s narratives suggested that power hierarchy in the cockpit does not exist anymore. Rather, captains need to engage with FOs to fulfill the task of missions. He said (Personal Communication, September 17, 2012):

When we provide CRM training, there is one lesson mentioned that there are variety of pilots. As a captain, you will be paired with different FOs for flight duties. The readiness of each FO is different. Some of them are cocky and willing to learn, but they may not have strong ability. CRM teaches the captain to engage with FOs differently. Sometimes we get a very junior FO who just finishes training. S/He may be scared of everything. Being a captain, we have to not only monitor their performance, but also support and even comfort them. From the perspective of CRM, it is a task orientation mission.
In my reading of Captain A’s account above, it echoes another one of his narratives I presented previously in this chapter, that the captain is ultimately responsible for everyone on the plane. Indeed, Ashcraft (2007) points out that captains are crafted as imposing father figures for airline pilots. The traditional stereotype of the captain as father figure represents absolute authority and superiority inside the cockpit and is privilege to be a “god” in cockpit, but Captain A mentioned that being a captain is not only responsible for his flight duties, but also contributes his knowledge and experiences to assist and nurture junior FOs. Captain A further highlighted that this is related to the (cockpit) cultural change of flight operation in his company (Personal Communication, September 17, 2012):

It is hard to change the 5,000 years of “Chinese Culture” immediately. Same thing goes to the cultural change of my company. We are in the phase of transformation. Therefore, the internalization of cultural change is very important. In fact, China Airlines has changed a lot. You will not be able to distinguish differences in a short time, but things change in the long term. Still, this cultural change is very slow from the bottom to top in the traditional carrier… To be honest with you, the internal education in my company is not consistent. The division of flight operation walks faster than other divisions. Company especially requires pilots to meet the highest standard, but ground staffs and flight attendants do not really follow up.

What do you think the factor(s) that are contributed to this?

I think this is related to company culture. Management considers that pilots should be professional.
Ground staff and flight attendants are just general.

Captain A’s narratives suggested that the company has implemented certain changes in terms of flight operations. However, he also pointed out some potential issues in this changing process. Apparently, this internal cultural change is not consistent in other divisions as Captain A mentioned that the company has a higher standard for pilots, especially when the company considers pilots should be professional, but others may not. This blurring line of “being professional” may create the pressure or fear for pilots’ regular job performances or even possible joblessness. Both Captain A and Captain C’s accounts showed that pilots have these pressure and fear from the company’s managements in terms of job performance. Captain A said (Personal Communication, September 17, 2012):

Every half year, pilots need to have regular physical checkups. If you do not pass the certain physical requirements, you might be temporarily suspended from flight duty. We also have regular proficiency check (PC) and proficiency training (PT) every half year. Same rules apply! If you do not pass, you might receive different types of treatments, ranging from retraining to suspending duty. These regular checks have been dreadful nightmares for every pilot.

Captain C also poked fun of the whole process of these regular checks by referring to the flight simulator as the “Scary Box” and discussed a previous event when the company used these checks to fire some unqualified pilots (Personal Communication, December 22, 2012):

I joke around by calling the flight simulator a Scary Box.
Every half year we have our PC and PT. This means if you are lucky, you only get into the scary box four times a year. When we are in the scary box, we will be assigned to deal with different types of emergency situations or eliminate malfunctions of airplanes. In the real world, we may not encounter these problems. That is why we need to get into the scary box to **practice**. In addition to my own regular checks, sometimes we may need to support for other missions of training.

Although you only support the mission, you may be **failed** if you don’t do a good a job.

Once I was supporting a training mission, the check pilot (CP) was asking question to the FO. The FO did not know the answer. CP turned to me and wanted me to answer the same question. I responded, “I was only supporting this training mission.” CP said, “It does not mean I cannot ask you question.” I was glad that I could answer that question.

Few years ago when the company started straightening out the flight operation, we overheard that there was a **list**. Every pilot was scared. I talked to another senior pilot and mentioned to him that we were going to pair up for PC and PT. This senior pilot whispered to me, “Don’t worry! Both of us were not on the list.”

In fact, pilots who were fired by company at that time were actually unqualified for this job. However, they were sacrificed by policy. Most of them retired from air force in their 40s.
and transitioned to commercial airlines.  
There were no systematic programs to educate them.  
The company only asked for them to be able to fly the plane.  
It depended on which captain (instructor pilot) you were assigned to.  
There were  
no standard procedures to follow.  
Only techniques and tricks.  
We called that the  
“Glorious Era”  
for captains in company.  
Some of captains were assholes,  
and everybody hated them.  
Those pilots followed what used to work in the cockpit.  
Suddenly,  
the company asked them  
to study  
and set up different types of exams for them to take.  
Many of them were around their 50s or close to 60 years old.  
It was very tough for those old pilots.  
Most of them who were on the list did not survive.

When Captain C shared this story to me, I was stunned by how straightforward he was. He mentioned that every pilot was literally afraid of company at that moment. More specifically, pilots are worried if they were put on the “list.” Captain C’s narratives suggested that there is a deep fear for pilots related to possible jobless if they could not pass regular checks. This goes back to previous discussions of how pilots consider their job as a profession or professional. Pilots know that they are ultimately responsible for flight safety, and flight safety requires pilots’ better knowledge and flying skills. Through the regular PC and PT checks, pilots get evaluated to make sure they are qualified to fly and equipped with better understanding to handle emergency situations. On the other hand, pilots are also in a passive position in terms of these regular checks. Although I agree with Captain C that certain pilots were definitely not qualified to fly and were listed to be “eliminated” through regular but tougher exams, those old time pilots were
definitely in a less favorable position. However, this is also a message delivered to other pilots who survived, “If you did not work hard, you might be the next.” Mumby (1988) argues that power sometimes is used to against the interests of certain organizational groups and in favor of others. In the case of Taiwanese commercial airline pilots here, power functions in a hegemonic way to structure the need of the company’s managements – unqualified pilots need to be out because safety measurements have to be advanced.

Both Captain A and Captain C mentioned pressure and fear are always there. They just learn to overcome and make sure not to affect their everyday normal life. I feel they understand it is their ethical obligation to fulfill these “professional requirements” although they may not agree with all measurements. I end this section by inserting Captain C’s narratives when he talked about how the company’s management used the magnifier to verify every move and decision of pilots in flight operations (Personal Communication, December 22, 2012):

Sometimes
we only have very short time
to make the decision and
to solve the problem
in cockpit upon the air,
but company’s management
take a very close look of
our decisions and
actions
in cockpit
to judge
whether we follow the rule(s) or not.
If not, we might get disciplined.

Do I have any choice?
No.
I just need to tell myself
“be careful”
before I make any decision.
One small mistake is too much for this career!

Summary

My mind was blown when I heard Captain C’s words, “One small mistake is too much for this career.” I am not so sure how I feel about their job after interviewing and writing up this chapter. One thing I understand is that commercial airline pilots are not just big bus drivers. In my interviews with three pilots, I cannot say they gave me the whole landscape of flying world. However, they did explain to me something I never really thought of before I wrote this dissertation. From reading transcripts and field notes from interviews to creating pilots’ personal narratives, I come to appreciate what they do. Commercial airline pilots are professional. They require knowledge, skill, and attitude for their job. They are professional not because of the job itself, but because the way they have to invest to maintain the eligibility of keeping flying. We only see the surface of this job. It is not about making a lot of money, traveling around the world, and having hot girl in both sides. It is about responsibility and the insistence of completing flight duty safely.

In this chapter, it is not my intention to make judgment calls based on my interviews and interpretations. Rather, applying the conceptual framework I set up in this study, I use the pilots’ narratives to (re)present how they constructed their professional identities. In addition to discussing what professional means to commercial airline pilots, the participants’ narratives also sparked topics such as resistance and dissent, popular (re)presentation, and power and fear. It is intriguing to see that all these themes circle around “being professional” and create a space to discuss influences of pilots’
professional identities construction. In next chapter, I provide the conclusion of this dissertation study. Furthermore, I examine the ethical challenges of this study specifically channeling processes and limitations of data collection, translation, writing up, and my role as a researcher. Finally, I conclude this study with suggestions for future research.
Chapter Five: Conclusion, Challenges, and Future Directions

When I started graduate school almost seven years ago, my enthusiasm for civil aviation led me to conduct research regarding commercial airline pilots. At first, I was not so sure what exactly I wanted to study about commercial airline pilots from my communication background. Some of my colleagues told me that organizational communication was a way to approach my research interest. I was very skeptical about how organizational communication could fit into this. In my narrow view, organizational communication is preoccupied by the rational model, positivism, and management bias (Tompkins, 1984). After systematically reading literatures from the field of organizational communication, I realized that focusing on the subjectivities of organizational members’ everyday lived experiences and their own consciousness-raising (Redding 1985; Redding & Tompkins 1988) creates the space for the possibility to empower organizational practices (Tompkins & Wanca-Thibault, 2001). This idea encouraged me to bring the perspective of organizational communication into scholarly conversation with my research interest in commercial airline pilots.

This research interest was further fermented by personal conversations with my pilot friend, the internet discussion forums, and pilots’ personal weblogs in Taiwan. Through these channels, I found out that the term “professional” has been defined differently, but it is also a taken-for-granted term in different contexts in contemporary everyday life. Therefore, I decided to ask the overarching question in this project: How
do Taiwanese commercial airline pilots construct their professional identities? In order to answer this question, I realized that I had to determine the meaning of being a professional, and how we use the term of professional to evaluate organizational members in job sites in everyday life.

The discussion of professionalism in modern society has hugely dominated by the field of sociology, specifically focusing on chronicling changes in the structure of work, while organizational communication scholars have started challenging the lack of conversation about the symbolic functions of professional (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Therefore, I not only traced theoretical analysis in the sociology of professions, but further investigated scholarship from identity research in organizational communication studies. This research agenda created a possible space for the advancement of communication-based understandings of the meanings and practices of professional identity as a complement to the sociological conception (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007; Cheney et al., 2010).

This dissertation project explored professionalism and the performance of identities by examining Taiwanese commercial airline pilots’ discursive practices in everyday life. My intentions for this project were with the hope to not only expand current knowledge of organizational communication from a critical rhetorical perspective, but to further explore the under-appreciated concept of professionalism of organizational members by examining discourse from different theoretical and methodological choices, such as a performance paradigm, critical rhetoric, and ethnographic interviews rather than a traditional textual approach. Theoretically, I
merged a performance paradigm and critical rhetorical perspective together to examine the discursive practices of organizational members. This interdisciplinary examination is applied to the study discourse of professionalism because organizational sites are often complicated. Methodologically, I conducted ethnographic interviews with Taiwanese commercial airline pilots in order to understand how they construct their personal, social, and professional identities. Through their personal storytelling, a dialogic space is created, not only letting pilots’ voice to be heard but also revealing how identities are created within and against a larger organizational identity. Overall, this project reflected my investment in the interdisciplinary examination of the meanings, functions, and consequence of discursive practices in everyday professional life. It further critiques relationships between power, domination, and resistance while reintroducing the roles of the body and materiality in the domain of professionalism, and provides ethical readings of larger and complex organizational cultures.

In the remaining of the final chapter of this dissertation project, I provide conclusions of this dissertation project, offer a reflexive critique specifically targeting on the research processes and ethical challenges of this project, and finally address future research directions as the end remarks of this project.

**Conclusion**

In this project, different narrative themes were identified and demonstrated how Taiwanese commercial airline pilots’ construct their professional identities. Their narratives suggest that the construction of professional identities is a complex and multidimensional process. While my participants shared different stories and different
experiences with me, the interplay of symbolic and material, as well as the universal and particular meanings of professionalism is reflected though their narratives. These narrative themes reveal that the construction of professional identities not only comes from organizational members themselves but also from the public’s perceptions and management’s requirements and pressures. First, being a professional commercial airline pilot requires sufficient knowledge, above average skill, and the right attitude. My participants specifically emphasize the importance of knowledge in their day-to-day flying life. Knowledge-based work is a hot topic in 21st century, or we constantly hear the popular phrase “knowledge is power.” In the contemporary cases, the discussion on rhetorical tendency of knowledge-based work is to divert from bodies and labors (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Still, organizational communication scholars argue that it is much needed to look into the matrix of relation between the symbolic and the material functions when it comes to the meanings and practices of work, and the examination can bring back the dialectically interactive understandings of how knowledge is operated in work sites (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007; Cheney & Cloud, 2006). On one hand, advanced technologies are implemented into new aircrafts to reduce pilots’ work load in flying, and pilots have to empower themselves to learn more and have the ability to solve problems while flying. On the other hand, being knowledgeable is not just about controlling an airplane, but also deals with non-aircraft system irregular operations. Commercial airline pilots embody the performance of “knowledge-base work” in their day-to-day flying life and point out this concept as one of the most important aspects to construct their professionalism.
While my participants put heavy emphasis on knowledge and skill in constructing their professional identities, the topic of an ethical attitude emerges in their narratives. All my participants are at the rank of captain, and they emphasized the importance of being the pilot in command (PIC) in each flight operation. The company’s values and policies are incorporated into pilots’ sense of professional responsibility. The top priority for pilots is the safety of flight operations, and this also includes the safety of the crew and passengers. As Captain B (Personal Communication, December 20, 2012) told me, “Some air traffic controllers will ask us the POB (people on board) in the radio communication. Every time I report the numbers back, I realize the responsibility I carry behind my back.” Other participants’ narratives demonstrate this same ethical principle. It is worth noting that my participants also mentioned that they are one of the people on the plane too. What they do for the safety of people on board is also for their job security or even their own lives. My participants’ narratives challenge the traditional view of professional responsibility by transforming the meaning of consumption, efficiency, or entrepreneurship to different ideas of social trusteeships (Cheney et al., 2010). They embody the performance of professionalism in discourses by identifying who they are and what they do at work. It is very clear that participants sent out a message regarding their professionalism, “I am the one that matters for my job.” They set a standard for us to respect them and understand what counts as a professional commercial airline pilot.

Although my participants mentioned that pilots’ professionalism develops primarily from “work” itself, they also negotiate their professional identities in relation to cultural and institutional definitions of “acting like a professional.” My participants
pointed out that both the public and the company management considers that the appearance of pilots represents high level of professionalism. The symbolic function of airline pilot’s uniform reveals how their bodies are configured and evaluated as an authoritative role through the salient of cultural perception and appraisal of work (Ashcraft, 2007; Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). My participants mentioned that wearing pilot’s uniform does not necessarily promote their professionalism of work. In reverse, the company sets up the rules about behaviors and appearances when pilots wear the uniform. Wearing the uniform also represents the image of company because all of their external behaviors are monitored by public. I further had conversations with my participants to discuss why they thought that company focuses heavily on their external behaviors. I also raised the question about the differences between Taiwanese pilots and U.S. pilots because activities my participants described, such as eating and walking with uniform on or not wearing the hat, does not seem to happen in the case of U.S. commercial airline pilots. My participants believed that cultural and regional differences play a part of this issue. Flying is a common career in the U.S., and U.S. companies may not restrict their pilots in regard to non-flying business. On the other hand, companies in Taiwan consider the employees’ appearance representative of the organizational image and reputation. Therefore, being professional also requires Taiwanese commercial airline pilots to fit the popular representation of their occupation because the professional image may also come from public and media. As Captain A said (Personal Communication, September 17, 2012), “If our demeanors are not uptight, public will have the doubt if we are capable to conduct flight duty. Is this pilot safe?” By examining differences in
discourse from Taiwanese commercial airline pilots, the idea of professionalism switches
in between symbolic and material as well as universal and particular (Cheney & Ashcraft,
2007). The Taiwanese cultural emphases of “being a professional commercial airline
pilot” further reveals that professionalism can be both concrete and fluid concept
depending on different languages, situations, and environments, suggesting that pilots’
construction of professional identities is an ongoing dynamic process through their own
stories and popular (re)presentations.

My participants and I spent lots of time to discussing the role that company’s
management plays in their construction of professional identities. The pilots’ narratives
create multiple scenarios to explain their ongoing resistant, dissents, and frustrations
toward company management, and their professional identities revolve around the
production, maintenance, and transformation of power relations between themselves and
company management (Mumby, 2001). The contents of pilots’ resistance and dissents are
primarily related to flight operations. A huge blow off is that the way company
management handling irregular operations during the severe weather situation has been
seriously criticized by my participants. Pilots complained that there is no proper
instruction and authorization to tell them what they can or cannot do in the situations of
irregular operations. They have raised concerns of potential risk of flight safety because
of both physical and psychological fatigue in such long working hours, and being
punished for bending rules is not even the major concern. In the meantime, participants
also pointed out that certain flight operational policies and rules are not reasonable when
applied to real situations. In both cases, pilots have tried to voice out their concerns and
thoughts to management. My participants specifically mentioned the tension between pilots and management, especially about the issues of flight operations. However, they also pointed out that sometimes the company’s management is not willing to change or remove certain policies because they do not want to deal with the issue of responsibility, and management also has different angles of vision than manage pilots. Therefore, pilots have no choice but to execute these rules or policies from time to time. Otherwise, they may be disciplined, such as being suspended from flight duty, reexamined for qualification, or even getting fired by management. Ashcraft (2005) indicates that organizational members’ discursive constructions sometimes suggest that “they perceived their control to be eroding and they responded [certain issues] in kind” (p. 84). In the case of my participants, they even rationalized why the company implemented certain policies to manage pilots because of the past records of company. Nevertheless, their resistance is not necessary the proof of pilots’ subordinate standing in the company; rather, pilots’ acknowledge declining control weigh into their professional lived experiences (Ashcraft, 2005). This acknowledgement of declining control also plays into pilots’ fear of losing their job if they do not obey the company’s orders.

Still, the totality of organizational control and resistance between the company’s management and Taiwanese commercial airline pilots reveals the importance of discussing marginal voices and politics in the constitutive sites of organizational power, resistance, and identity formation (Ferguson, 1994; Mumby, 2001). Employees’ resistance and dissent should be sought at the margins of organizations, of discourse, and of experiences because these are the unmanaged spaces which are beyond the surveying
gaze of organizational control (Gabriel, 1999). Employees always seek to speak about dissatisfaction in order to create the possibility of change and transformation in the organization. However, when speaking out fails, employees may lose their loyalty to organizations and choose to leave. In the case of Taiwanese commercial airline pilots, my participants mentioned that many pilots have chosen to exit and work with other non-Taiwanese airlines because they did not feel the respect from company management after voicing their concerns many times. The company pushes pilots to act like professionals; however, when the company does not take serious consideration of their professional suggestions regarding flight operations, how are they going to respond?

All the conclusions reveal that identity construction is a continuous process and is relational, dynamic, and ideological entrapments (Hall, 1996; Alcoff & Mohanty, 2006), and the political implications of identity are not transparent (Alcoff & Mohanty, 2006). Therefore, Taiwanese commercial airline pilots’ personal identities can be seen as the form of subjectivity embedded in a larger organizational context, which is connected to organizational behaviors and values (Alvesson et al., 2008). The notion of personal identity also reflects what professionalism has been broadly referred to and allows a rhetorical justification for certain types of individual behaviors and for expressions of organizational postures (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). In this dissertation project, I read the professional identities of Taiwanese commercial airline pilots as “highly suggestive of multiple aspects of performance” and a “resource of ambiguity” because these aspects and resources may or may not be integrated or interrelated (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007, p. 158). The resource of ambiguity provides a flexible reading of Taiwanese commercial
airline pilots’ personal narratives and further expands the application about material instantiations of professionalism and new assertions of their professional identities (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). The interplay of the symbolic and material meanings of professionalism from my participants’ discourses further creates the space of possibility for the excavation of subjugated knowledge (Madison, 2007). Overall, following Cheney and Ashcraft’s (2007) suggestion, a communication-oriented analysis is applied in this project to explore the consequential meanings of the professional; coding work of Taiwanese commercial pilots; and expressing pilots’ mode of performance. With the awareness of structural, material, and bodily conditions of work, the insights from a communication perspective can challenge the long time neglected phenomena regarding the power of the symbolic in sociological approaches (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007).

Ultimately, reading labor relationships in discourse creates a possible space to learn how Taiwanese commercial airline pilots’ narratives evolve and function consequentially in everyday lived practice from the scope of communication (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007).

**Research and Ethical Challenge**

Having studied in graduate school for almost seven years, I often wonder, “What is the purpose for my research? Who read my works? Does my research matter?” We often challenge the usefulness of theory because some people do not believe that learning theory is going to benefit their future career once they leave the campus. I firmly believe that theory helps us to interpret, explain, understand, and critique the complexity of human experiences and relations in order to develop more possibilities. My research interest in the intersections between a critical rhetorical approach and a performance
perspective to organizational communication has deeply influenced my view of the relationship between academic writing and everyday lived experiences. This interdisciplinary perspective helps me realize that it is necessary to construct the skill and the space to unpack the taken-for-granted nature of life. Therefore, I wanted to jump into the field and discover the reflective and meaningful conversation from the community I intended to study. What I did not expect is the challenge and distrustful attitude of my motive from the community. In this next section, I consider how my experience of doing fieldwork warrants a necessary discussion of the researcher’s self-reflexivity in order to make sense why such challenges happened in data collection. McKerrow (1989) indicates that the critique of freedom in a critical rhetorical project should involve in a self-reflexivity about writing and thinking. In addition, the challenges I encountered in fieldwork also had an impact on my writing and allowed me a space to discuss the problem of speaking for others (Alcoff, 1991). Through this self-reflexive critique, I look forward to critically examining my assumptions and positions in this dissertation project and further evaluate the quality of this study.

**Challenges in the fieldworks.** As a graduate student rejection often becomes a part of daily life, and I have become used to it. However, I started to stress out because of the process of data collection. Not because it was the summer peak time and pilots were busy, but because some responses I received regarding the inquiries of interviewing:

“*It was really not a good timing.*”
“I don’t like to talk about myself.”
“I prefer to write if you have a questionnaire.”
“I think you should check with someone else.”
“Why do you want to interview me? What is your motive?”
It was such a frustrating situation to recruit the participants, but it made me reconsider certain questions and politics of this dissertation project. Whose interest does this project serve? Did I just use the participants for the research purpose? Do I just want to fulfill my curiosity of commercial airline pilots through this project? Where were cultural nuances that the project did not account for? Ultimately, why does always the tension exist between the researcher and the participants?

When I submitted my IRB application of this dissertation project, I identified potential benefits could include but not be limited to a better understanding of Taiwanese commercial airline pilots’ professional identities and how they situate themselves inside an organization and in society. The participants' participation in my study could create a space to provide insights and voices for other Taiwanese commercial airline pilots about what it means to be "professional" in their job, which could possibly impact and challenge the taken-for-granted concept of professionalism of organizational members. Still, a self-serving reason of this project is to fulfill the major academic requirement of my doctorate degree, which is my dissertation. Furthermore, I even considered rewriting this big project to a few small papers to submit to the conferences and journals for future publications. In this case, I questioned myself whether or not I just use my participants to advance my academic purposes.

One challenge I encountered when I recruited participants in this study was that some potential participants questioned my motive about approaching them. Two of my pilot friends helped me locate potential participants. However, when I contacted them and explained the purpose of this study, some of them did not respond well and challenged
my motive to approach them because they felt that I would take advantage of them. Although I made it very clear that it was up to them to give consent or refuse the interview, the distrust from the potential participants was the major challenge of the recruiting process. This situation made me go back to examine my own research assumptions of this study.

As a Taiwanese myself, I was born and raised in Taiwan. Therefore, I am familiar with the culture of the people I would be interviewing. I speak Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese, and English fluently. I assumed that this would allow me to communicate freely with Taiwanese commercial airline pilots. I also assumed that my friends who are pilots could help me refer to potential participants and could assist me to build trust with their fellow pilots. Unfortunately, this partial identification is problematic. The significant difference between me and pilots is that I am a stranger to most of them. I also do not work in the field of civil aviation. Just because I am a fan of aviation does not mean that they would allow me to interview them. Some of their reactions made me feel like

I

am

an intruder.

I would not describe some potential participants’ reactions as “hostile,” but this situation made me reconsider the proper relationships of researcher and participants in ethnographic studies. In this project, I interviewed three pilots. Captain A and I are long-time friends and have known each other since the early 2000s. Captain B and C were
referred by another pilot friend who could not be interviewed by me because of his flying schedule suddenly changed. Although Captain A and I never met in person all this year, we hit it off once I explained my research to him. I felt that this empowered him to be an active participant in my study because he answered all my questions, provided examples, and explained with details regarding some technical terms. His responses were extremely helpful for me to complete the project. Somehow I believed that my friendship with Captain A eased the tension between researcher and participant. He even said, “Let me know if you need more help regarding your project.”

On the other hand, both Captain B and C were friendly but sometimes reluctant to answer certain questions. I sensed tension between me and Captain B and C in our meetings. They were curious why I chose this topic for my dissertation project. Captain C even asked me what I intended to do after I finished this project. Meanwhile, both of them also did not agree to be audio-taped in the meetings. It was another big setback for me. I tried to explain that it is important for me to audio-taped the interviews because it would help the write-up process for this project. Still, they had concerns about confidentiality even though I guaranteed that personal information would not be revealed.

bell hook (2000) argues that trust is the foundation of genuine connection. It was certainly very hard for me to gain the trust from Captain B and Captain C in such a short time. My research assumptions ignored that my relationships with them might not work like the one I have with Captain A. In this case, it strikes that the distrust feeling toward me from both Captain B and Captain C further impacted the procedure of my data collection process and later on my writing.
Overall, it is necessary to critically examine my research assumptions of this dissertation project. During the whole fieldwork process, I found that I could not avoid personal, cultural, and organizational sensitivities. The challenges I encountered in the process of recruiting participants and data collection also made me reconsider my own subjectivities and my embodied performance as an academic researcher in this project. Academic research and writing is indeed the core practice of academic life. However, one important ethical consideration of contemporary ethnography is, “Whose story? Whose research?” Furthermore, the translation of participants’ personal narratives in between Chinese and English creates a space of liminality about language use, word choices, and meanings. With two participants refusing to be audio-taped, the question also arises, “What really happened in the fieldwork?” In the next section I offer discussions of these challenges in my writing process of this project.

**The problem of speaking for others: Their stories/my research.** Because of the challenges I encountered in my fieldworks, the ethical considerations of writing and editing fieldwork have to be explored (Goodall, 2000) in this project. First, since two of my participants did not consent for audio-taping in the interviews, I could only take field notes to record the content of the meetings. Later, I ran into problems creating pilots’ personal narratives while transcribing my field notes. Goodall (2000) argues that ethnographer should “record facts as they actually happened, and analyze them within the known theoretical and methodological boundaries of professional excellence” (p. 154). Although I considered that most of my field notes were complete, I constantly questioned myself, “Did I twist my participants’ meanings of words or sentences?” The
disadvantage of not being able to audio-taped interviews is that I could not go back to check the specific wording of my participants. In this case, would I be able to “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” (Goodall, 2000, p. 155)? Second, all my interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese. Field notes were taken in Chinese basis, but also combined with some English. Dodge (2011) points out in his research that Mandarin Chinese is a tonal language where same phonetic spelling may refer to different definitions and meanings. Adding up the complexity, some words or phrases in Chinese may not even be translated to English with proper vocabularies. In this case, it is challenging to translate pilots’ personal narratives from Chinese to English with fidelity, fluency, and elegance.

The two challenges of writing and editing combined with the hardship of fieldworks created a space to discuss the problem of speaking for others (Alcoff, 1991) in this dissertation project. Alcoff (1991) indicates that speaking for others, as a discursive practice, is under criticism and being rejected under some circumstances and in some communities. Alcoff (1991) further argues that as a researcher in academia, we are authorized to express and encompass the ideas, needs, and goals of others though theories, but we also have to reconsider whether this discursive practice of speaking for others is a legitimate and valid practice, and what criteria for validity we should look into. Therefore, I asked myself, “Do I speak for Taiwanese commercial airline pilots?” When I transcribed my field notes to pilots’ personal narratives, how did I “edit the voice” in order to keep the characters and communicative ability of them (Goodall, 2000, p. 165)?
One thing I recognized while writing my result section of this dissertation project is that editing should be a more “restrictive rhetorical activity,” which could only allow me to change my writing rather than “the facts, the data, or the sequence of events” from my field notes (Goodall, 2000, pp. 166-167). Since two of my participants refused to be audio-taped, the creation of their personal narratives was not easy just based on my field notes only. I knew I had to be extremely cautious when I processed both Captain B and Captain C’s words because I would not be able to re-listen to their stories through audio recording. When I took the field notes in the meetings, I made efforts that all information provided by pilots recorded correctly. Sometimes I had to interrupt their talking and asked them specific phrases and words they used. I also mentioned to both of them that I might have to contact them for further clarifications if I had questions or concerns in transcribing what had been said in the meetings. Both Captain B and Captain C provided their email addresses. Later, I contacted both of them in the hope of their help to clarify few stories they provided. Captain B did not respond to my inquiries. Although it is not necessary for an ethnographer to report the exact words spoken and to put exact meaning of the context (Goodall, 2000), I find it still limited me to interpret some of Captain B’s stories. Therefore, I made the decision to not use certain parts of my interviews with him.

Furthermore, translating my participants’ narratives from Chinese to English creates another representational boundary to cross in this dissertation project. When I conducted interviews with my participants, I would always ask my participants to explain some “professional terms” in English. I found this part was relatively easy to deal with. For commercial airline pilots, it is very usual to use English when they use “professional
terms” from their job. On the other hand, the problems of translation also target on
certain metaphors, idioms or slangs in Chinese. I specifically discussed this issue with all
my participants during the meetings. I also asked for their thoughts about certain
translations issues immediately and provided choices of few words and phrases in
English for my participants to select. Some metaphors or idioms in Chinese also have
similar translation to popular usage in English. Therefore, it is the best practice to follow
the popular usage in English. I also relied on participants’ feedback on my writings. I sent
out their personal narratives in both English and Chinese to all my participants and asked
for their feedbacks regarding translations. Captain A and Captain C responded to my
emails. Captain A provided great feedbacks regarding some of his personal narratives
while Captain C’s feedbacks were very limited, but he made a comment after reading his
personal narratives I created, and he said that it (personal narrative) was an interesting
form to read. He also appreciated that I did not change what he said in the interview
although he felt that some of his accounts are “too detailed.”

Revisiting decisions I have made for editing and writing challenge me to
reconsider my position as a researcher in this dissertation project. Do I speak for pilots?
Or do I speak about pilots? Alcoff (1991) argues that it is almost impossible to speak for
others without mentioning information about them, and researcher may speak about
others as an advocate. Alcoff (1991) further brings up the act of representation by
pointing out that both speaking for and about others engage “in the act of other’s needs,
goals, situation, and… who they are” (p. 9). Therefore, I constructed participants’
“subject-positions” and did not just discover their “true selves” in this project (p. 9). As a
researcher, the specific subject-positions I speak for and about others create “their selves” through the discursive practices, and this type of representation should not just a simple act of discovery and should have an impact on the individual who is represented (Alcoff, 1991, p. 10). That said, I hope my readers of this project can attach to what they have read from pilots’ subject-positions of discursive practice I presented even though the readers may never heard of those stories (Alcoff, 1991).

Moreover, the acts of both speaking for others and speaking about others require researcher to put the body in the performance as well (Madison, 2009). The process from fieldwork to writing up in this dissertation project forced me to learn to be vulnerable and move my own body “through the space and time of another…for the purpose of knowledge [and] for the purpose of realization and discovery” (Madison, 2009, p. 191). Even though the rejections from potential participants, and challenges from fieldworks and writings created a hard situation for me to struggle and finish this project, I felt that my “[r]esponse, response-ability, and responsibility [are] aligned with advocacy and ethics” (Madison, 2009 p. 192). I understood that I had the responsibility to actively assist others and to learn their “tactics, symbols, and everyday forms of resistance” in order to create platforms for those who still struggle to be known and heard (p. 192). I wanted to tell about what I have heard, learned, and felt from my participants in the field through performance to my audiences. I also understood that I represented my participants’ identities and narratives, and the ethical consideration of the representation requires me to provide opportunities for them to have the ability to respond (Madison, 2009). Overall, writing this performance ethnography helped me understand my/pilots’
behaviors and life worlds, and (un)conscious needs and desires, and it further taught me to make performances doing the labor of advocacy ethically and reflecting my responsibility because performance will transform a reality, reflecting who I/pilots am/are and what I/pilots can become (Madison, 2009). This is an ongoing effort of the advocacy.

**Future Directions**

It is the obvious that there is a lack of voices from certain populations inside the group of Taiwanese commercial airline pilots in this dissertation project. All my participants in this study are male, captain rank, and in their mid-30s and early 40s. While I did not particularly design this project to investigate certain demographic information such as age, I found that age might play a role in pilots’ construction of professional identities as well. Pilots’ personal narratives in this project revealed that they have to be nurtured in different levels. Some narratives also suggested that sometimes certain senior captains’ experiences and knowledge are the backbones for flight operations. Allan (2011) indicates that age is a social construction encompassing human beings new consciousness, and she calls for further examination of age from a diversity and communication perspective. Therefore, future research should consider including participants from different age ranges to see if there are variations in professional identities in the same job.

Participants of this study are all captain rank. All of them are well-built and in a relatively stable career life now. They have been promoted to captains from first officers, but they may also have a chance to continue “climbing up” to higher positions, such as instructor pilots, check pilots, or higher managerial positions. In this dissertation project,
there were no first officers, captains who are instructors or check pilots, and captains who are in the administration positions to be interviewed. Although my participants provided fruitful narratives for me to discuss professionalism, power, resistance and domination, different voices should also be embraced in order to consider the possibility for particular experiences and viewpoints (Cheney & Nadesan, 2008). The life of a commercial airline pilot has different levels of requirements to reach and fulfill. A first officer’s perspective of professional identities may be very different from a captain who is an instructor pilot or in managerial position. A further investigation to include different rankings of commercial airline pilots may provide a bigger picture and intensive reading of what professionalism is and how professional identities are constructed in the different stages of their organizational life.

The lack of voice from female Taiwanese commercial airline pilots is another downside of this dissertation project. Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) point out that the aspects of gender are registered on public consciousness of aviation from the beginning of flight history. Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) further examine how the developed notion of professionalism contributes to the image of lady-flier and is eventually against women’s legitimate role in the professionalized cockpit. Since Taiwanese airlines created cadet programs to recruit new pilots, more women have entered the field of commercial flying. Still, the majority of commercial airline pilots are male, and traditionally masculinity is connected to the commercial airline pilots’ professionalism from a pioneer era (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004). Future research should specifically look into the Taiwanese/Chinese perspectives in gender roles and relations first and further discuss the
gendered communication from socio-political and economic perspectives in the civil aviation industry in Taiwan. With more female pilots entering into commercial flying in Taiwan, how does “masculinity” in cockpit affect the embodiment of gender performance of both Taiwanese male and female pilots? By reading gendered labor of commercial airline pilots closely, the future research can provide a larger picture to not only present professional identities and organizational cultures, but also reflect the materiality of socio-political pressure and struggle of the image of airline pilots (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004).

In the discussion of constructing professional identities, some of my participants mentioned certain career goals they want to achieve as commercial airline pilots, such as promotion to captain (all my participants are captain rank), being instructor pilot, or moving up to administrative positions. Participants’ narratives also spread the ideas of “harsh” working environments, such as long working hours and salary structures. Therefore, the discussion of constructing professional identities can further extend to the conversation of meaningful work. Cheney, Zorn, Planalp, and Lair (2008) consider the concept of meaningful work within a constellation of concerns including “job enrichment, work-life balance, career path, leisure, [and] life satisfaction” (p. 137). Cheney et al., (2008) further suggests that organizational communication research can look into relationships between discourses about work and work-related identities and how organizational culture can foster meaningful work. Therefore, future research should look into pilots’ discourses of professional identities and meaningful work together and reconsider how these two concepts interplay with each other in the process of
organizational members’ identity construction. The symbolism and materialism of job, work, and professional should be examined as a nexus of practice.

Another topic arises when my participants discussed many Taiwanese commercial airline pilots work in South Korea, the Middle East, Hong Kong, or China now. For multiple reasons, including but not limited to salary structures, inefficient management from the company in Taiwan, disrespect from the company’s management and so forth, drove those pilots to leave and work for foreign airlines. World labor migration is indeed the phenomenon which both organizational and cultural communication scholars should consider addressing in future research. Cheney (2009) indicates that migration “pushes and pulls of politics and economics, and to individual and collective striving” (p. 99). Whether it is voluntary or involuntary decisions to leave one’s home and start fresh in a new country or region, international migration should be discussed through different causes, effects, and personal experiences (Cheney, 2009). In the case of Taiwanese commercial airline pilots working for foreign airlines, I am hoping to further expand the research to the issues of international migration on “considerations of many parts of the world,” “questions of coerced to [in]/voluntary forms of migration,” “the effects of migration itself on individuals and groups,” “questions of social identities,” and “responses…to the challenges of and opportunities for migration” (Cheney, 2009, p. 100).

Finally, the discussions of professionalism and professional identities are still hugely grounded in Euro-American contexts. Professionalism and professional identities should not just reflect work itself, but also represent the norms, expectations, and
priorities of the particular society organizational members live in (Lair, Shenoy, McClellan, & Mcguire, 2008). In the case of Taiwanese commercial airline pilots I presented in this dissertation project, the meanings of “being a professional” are not even the same across different fleets inside the same company. Not to even mention to the differences of commercial flying in between Taiwan and U.S. Cheney and Nadesan (2008) argues that the practical barriers across cultures to the phenomenology of experiences should be confronted by both organizational members and researchers because these phenomena “are influenced by cultural norms regarding power, identity, and expressiveness” (p. 183). Overall, when we theorize professionalism and professional identities in the field of organizational communication, we should also trouble the “generalized hegemonic imposition” and “consensually expected meanings” (Lair et al., 2008, p. 177) of what constitutes “being a professional.”

**Epilogue**

Transforming my personal interest to this research project is a big challenge for me.

A challenge

I knew

I could not avoid.

Often times I wonder why I write and who reads my work.
Does my work *mean* anything
to the communication field
or
to the society at large?

I wrote about professional identities of pilots in this project.

Now, I want to ask myself,

“What is my professional identity?”

Inside this gigantic non-profit compound,

I write, I challenge, and I survive.

What do I (l)earn?

I (l)earn

I have the privilege.

I have the privilege to speak *for* and *about* others.

The privilege I have

grants me the space

to *theorize* complex human communicative experiences,

and

*transform* these experiences to “knowledge.”
Not everyone has the privilege that I have.

Treasuring and recognizing this privilege makes me realize what I am responsible for. I have to wisely use this privilege to challenge the unreflective day-to-day human experiences.

This is not just my job.

This is my professional identity.
References


Appendix A

Interviewing Questions

Title of Research: Performing the Personal within the Organizational: Communicating Professional Identities through Taiwanese Commercial Airline Pilots’ Personal Narratives

The following prompt questions will be asked to help participants create their own personal narratives during the process of ethnographic/unstructured interviews. The interviews are left more to the agency of the participants and may or may not include all of the questions and may also answer other questions outside this list. Therefore, the order of these questions is the general plan, and may change to let the interview process flow naturally. The interview will be more of a casual conversation with the interviewee being the primary participant within the conversation. I will also ask aid questions to help participants facilitate their thoughts, such as, “Would you mind to share more details about this? (可否請你/妳提供更多的細節?)” or “Do you have a story going with this? (你/妳有關於這個部分的故事嗎?)”

1. Can you describe your background before and after you began working for commercial airline? (可否請你/妳提供開始於商用航空公司工作前後的個人背景資料？)

2. Why did you decide to be a commercial airline pilot? (為什麼你/妳決定成為商用航空公司的飛行員？)

3. According to your everyday experience, do you consider commercial airline pilots as a professional? (根據你的經驗，你/妳覺得做為一個商用航空公司的飛行員是一項專業嗎？)

4. Do you consider impressions of commercial airline pilots from general public help you construct professional identities as a commercial airline pilot? Why or Why not? (你/妳覺得社會大眾對於商用航空公司飛行員的印象與認知是否幫助你/妳構建做為一個商用航空飛行員的專業認同？)

5. What does professional or professionalism mean to you? (對你/妳而言，專業是什麼？)

6. Do you consider certain rules and regulations related to your job set by company managements help you construct professional identities as a commercial airline pilot? Why or Why not?
(你/妳覺得公司管理階層所制定的工作規則是否幫助你/妳建構做為一個商用航空飛行員的專業認同？)
Appendix B

Email to Gatekeepers

English

Hello Captain/Mr. __________,

I am delighted to inform you that the data collecting plan of my dissertation titled “Performing the Personal within the Organizational: Communicating Professional Identities through Taiwanese Commercial Airline Pilots’ Personal Narrative” has been approved by Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at the University of Denver.

The reason I send this email is to ask for your permission to be my gatekeeper in terms of identifying potential participants for this study. This study is designed to look at how Taiwanese commercial airline pilots perform their professional identities in everyday life. The ethnographic/unstructured interview will be conducted to help understand how Taiwanese commercial airline pilots construct their personal, social, and professional identities. Therefore, the criteria of potential participants are as follow:

(1) Citizens of Taiwan
(2) Taiwanese
(3) Healthy 18+ years old
(4) Both female and male pilots are welcomed
(5) Currently working as commercial airlines pilots in Taiwan

I am looking for recruiting approximately 5-10 pilots for interviews. Please find attachment for a brief summary of this study and my contact information that you can forward to potential participants who fit into the criteria above.

Potential participants can inform you whether or not they are interested in participating at this study. If they were willing to participate, I would contact them through Email or phone call for more details. They can also contact me directly.

Your help is hugely appreciated. If you should have other questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me for further clarification.

Thank you,
Kai-chun Chuang
教官您好：

在此很高興的通知您，我的博士論文 Performing the Personal within the Organizational: Communicating Professional Identities through Taiwanese Commercial Airline Pilots’ Personal Narrative 資料收集計劃已經獲得 Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at the University of Denver 的核準。

透過這封電子郵件，希望能獲得您的首肯與協助，以便鎖定本研究潛在的受訪者。我的博士論文主要希望探討台灣商用航空公司飛行員如何於每日生活中展演他們的專業認同。透過民族誌/非結構性訪談，希望瞭解台灣商用飛行員如何建構個人、社會以及專業認同。因此，本研究的受訪者需符合以下條件：

(1) 台灣公民
(2) 台灣人
(3) 需年滿 18 歲，身心健康
(4) 男性與女性飛行員均可
(5) 現時於台灣的商用航空公司飛行

本研究預計徵募 5-10 名飛行員接受訪談。另外，隨本郵件的附上有關於我的博士論文研究的簡單說明，以及我的聯絡方式，以方便您將本附件檔轉發給本郵件潛在的受訪者。

潛在的受訪者可以告知您是否願意參與本研究，若是願意受訪，我將透過電子郵件或電話與他們聯絡更多的細節。他們也可以直接聯絡我。

在此非常珍惜與感謝您的協助，如果您有任何其他的疑問，請隨時與我聯絡。

謝謝
莊愷群
Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Performing the Personal within the Organizational: Communicating Professional Identities through Taiwanese Commercial Airline Pilots’ Personal Narratives

You are invited to participate in a dissertation study about how Taiwanese commercial airline pilots perform professional identity in everyday life. This research is conducted by Kai-chun Chuang, a Doctoral Candidate in Communication Studies at the University of Denver, CO USA. Kai-chun can be reached by both U.S. cell phone +1 (720) 201-6988 and Taiwan cell phone 0975470264 or kchug2@du.edu. This project is supervised by dissertation advisor, Dr. Bernadette Marie Calafell, Department of Communication Studies, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208 USA, +1 (303) 871-4322, bcalafel@du.edu.

Participation in this study involves interviews. The interviews should take about 90 to 120 minutes of your time. The interview will involve responding to questions relating to professional identities. Participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The risks associated with this project are minimal. If, however, you experience discomfort you may discontinue the interview at any time. The researcher respects your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty.

Your responses will be identified by code number only and will be kept separate from information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Only the researcher will have access to your individual data and any reports generated as a result of this study will use pseudonyms when connected to an interview exemplar. However, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. Although no questions in this interview address it, we are required by law to tell you that if information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Paul Olk, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at +1-303-871-4531, or you may email du-irb@du.edu, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs or call +1-303-871-4050 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-4820 USA.

Your participation is sincerely appreciated. You may keep this page for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not
understand any part of the above statement, please contact Kai-chun with any questions you have.

Informed Consent Form

I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called “Performing the Personal within the Organizational: Communicating Professional Identities through Taiwanese Commercial Airline Pilots’ Personal Narrative.” I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

___ I agree to be audio-recorded.
___ I do not agree to be audio-recorded.

Participant Name (English) _________________________________________

Participant Name (Chinese) __________________________________________

Participant Signature _____________________________________________

Date __________________
告知受訪同意書

Performing the Personal within the Organizational: Communicating Professional Identities through Taiwanese Commercial Airline Pilots’ Personal Narratives

您已經接受邀請參與探討台灣商用航空公司飛行員如何在日常生活中展演其專業認同的博士論文研究，本研究由美國丹佛大學傳播系博士候選人莊愷群 (Kai-chun Chuang) 所執行。您可以透過以下的方式與我保持聯繫：美國手機 +1 720-201-6988、台灣手機 0975470264、或是電子郵件 kchuang2@du.edu。本研究由博士論文指導教授，美國丹佛大學傳播系副教授 Dr. Bernadette Marie Calafell 所監督。若有需要，您可以透過以下的方式與她聯繫：+1 303-871-4322、或是電子郵件 bcalafel@du.edu。

參與本研究將接受研究者的訪談，訪談所需時間大約介於 90-120 分鐘。您將回答數個有關專業認同的問題。參與本研究為完全自願性質，並且符合最小的風險。然而若是您於受訪的過程中感到不愉快，您可以隨時中止訪談。做為本研究的執行者，我將尊重您不回答任何可能導致您不愉快的問題。拒絕或中止參與本研究並不會受到任何懲罰。

您對訪談的回應將會以編碼的方式做為識別，並且會與您的個人資料分別放置，以便符合保密原則。只有本人 (研究執行者) 有權利處理您的個人資料，任何由您訪談回應所撰寫的報告均會以假名的方式呈現。然而，當本研究的任何資訊成為法院傳票命令的對象，美國丹佛大學將無法避免並服從法院傳票命令。此外，雖然本研究並無任何與自殺、他殺、虐待兒童，以及遺棄的相關問題，根據法律規定，當任何與上列議題相關的資訊出現於訪談回應中，我們將向相關主管機關報告。

如果您對於在訪談過程中有任何疑慮與抱怨，請與 Paul Olk, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects 聯絡，電話 +1 303-871-4531；您可以傳送電子郵件 du-irb@du.edu 到 Office of Research and Sponsored Programs 或是電話 +1 303-871-4050。您也可以寫信反應到 The University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-4820 USA。

在此誠心的感謝您的參與，您可以保留本告知受訪同意書做為參考。若是您完全瞭解並同意以上所述，請於下頁同意書簽名。若是您對於以上任何一部分的說明仍有不清楚的地方，請您隨時與我聯絡。