

Politeness Toward Dominance in Business Meetings

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Abstract

This paper will provide separate and extensive literature reviews of politeness and dominance. With this information as support, the results of a study examining the possible interplay of the two interpersonal devices during three observed business meetings of a board of school directors will then be reviewed.

Introduction

At first glance, polite and dominant interpersonal behaviors seem unrelated, even contradictory. Being polite suggests conducting courteous discourse. Dominance suggests forcing an agenda on another and aggressively controlling a conversation. Such perspectives seem to leave no room for integration, and relevant literature does not solidify a relationship, if one indeed exists.

Of the research gathered for this paper, only three authors suggest a dominance-politeness dynamic. Burgoon, Johnson and Koch (1998) wrote:

The use of politeness is often viewed as submissive, but it nevertheless can be very effective in achieving direction in a task-oriented group. If interpersonal dominance includes elements of social influence, then politeness behaviors may play a *significant role* [emphasis added] in establishing or maintaining dominance (p. 333).

Since this claim was put to paper, no significant inroads have been made toward confirming or refuting it, despite the similarities between politeness and dominance found upon further investigation into the two subjects. Firstly, both interpersonal behaviors are relational – they cannot manifest without a partner’s acknowledgement or acquiescence. A relational view posits that the self and other are dialectically linked because both interactants comprise the other to the self and mutually define each other in their communication (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, as cited in Arundale, 2006). Burgoon, Johnson and Koch (1998) stated that the existence of dominance *depends* on the submission of the other, and held that dominance *defines* the very nature of interpersonal relationships – lofty support for dominance’s importance in human interactions. Courtright, Millar and Rogers-Millar (1979) also recognized the relational essence

of dominance when they stated that to pinpoint the behavior in an interaction, analysis of paired messages is required at a minimum.

Like dominance, politeness displays occur exclusively among interactants. One cannot “do politeness” in isolation (Stewart, 2008, p. 51). Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory – to be examined later – sparked intense interest in the subject and led to scores of follow-up research. Grounded in Erving Goffman’s (1967) notion of face, the theory, like dominance, has been cast as face- or *relational* work (Locher, 2004). Recalling the significance of relational work as stated by Burgoon, Johnson and Koch (1998) permits the assertion that politeness, like dominance, also establishes the dynamics of relationships.

Taking the lead from Burgoon, Johnson and Koch (1998) and spurred by the similarities separately but distinctly identified between politeness and dominance in subsequent research, I seek to bolster research on politeness-dominance interrelation through a comprehensive literature review on both subjects and a discourse analysis of interpersonal interactions containing polite and dominant behaviors. Both endeavors will contribute to theory by fleshing out what are now amorphous yet considerable connections between politeness and dominance. Studies solidifying these links have been woefully absent in the 14 years since Burgoon, et. al’s intriguing and legitimate claim, and I intend to remedy this by uncovering robust relationships between the two behaviors, in turn supplying this neglected topic an overdue bank of research.

Moving Forward

Once the literature review is complete, the task becomes undertaking a real-world study of the possible interaction between politeness and dominance. As Burgoon, Johnson and Koch (1998) suggested, identifying the presence of politeness and dominance in a conversation is valuable when doing so from the perspective of how the former may achieve the latter. Can these

superficially opposed behaviors interact to allow a speaker to perform signature dominant acts – greater floor control and successful interruptions, among others – while using measures to soften the imposition to listeners that result from such acts? Can politeness achieve dominance?

Again, extant literature holds that interpersonal interactions are required for the existence of polite and dominant tactics. Thus, at a minimum, observing conversations between dyads is necessary for a study of this sort. The setting must also include discourse that lends itself to the occurrence of polite and dominant tactics. Most ideal is an environment where these behaviors occur naturally, a fact that discourages the use of researcher-created venues and topics of conversation. Furthermore, high stakes, professional atmospheres are more likely to require mitigation of dominant maneuvers with politeness measures than personal conversations between partners or other intimates. For one, expectations of civility in professional settings outweigh those in intimate settings. Controlling emotions during business interactions is standard, socially expected behavior, just as openly expressing these emotions – with or without politeness considerations – is common behavior during heated discussions among intimate dyads.

For another, dominance is much more likely to subtly manifest during professional interactions as opposed to personal conversations. The former requires increased tact and careful linguistic choice whereas the latter, due to familiarity, more readily accepts bluntness and overt aggression. Burgoon, Johnson and Koch (1998) wrote that tempered dominance – elements of assertiveness, energy, poise, task-focus and initiative peppered with vivacity, gregariousness, dramatism, and conversational facility – may be the key to charismatic leadership, interpersonal attraction, and successful interpersonal influence. These characteristics are common elements of a successful businessperson. Thus, “tempered dominance” – or dominance tinged with politeness – would be more observable among professionals in structured settings than among close

acquaintances in relaxed atmospheres. In other words, exerting dominance professionally benefits from a polite touch, thus making observation of these scenarios a more fruitful exercise.

Ensuring the observed interactions occur regularly and consistently in the same forum is also important to help eliminate external and fluctuating variables. With these considerations in mind, business meetings are a logical setting in which to perform a discourse analysis on politeness and dominance. These venues are flush with differing personalities vying for attention paid to their positions. Taking the floor and controlling prevailing opinions requires savvy. To achieve these goals – to gain interpersonal dominance – politeness may pave the way.

I will examine three formal business meetings held by the board of school directors for a Pennsylvania school district. To inform this study, I will perform a literature review of politeness and dominance that will touch on research on business meetings, school boards and communities of practice.

Literature Review

Since the possible interaction of politeness and dominance is not adequately represented in literature, it is necessary to examine the two phenomena individually. Once completed, I can cross-reference both bodies of research to supply the foundation for this study.

Politeness

Due to politeness' long history and its complexity of associative meanings, a definition is not as clear and simple as it may seem (Eelen, 2001). Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (2006) claimed politeness is “a set of norms or values that crucially influences the...strategic action of individuals...[and] reflects in verbal and nonverbal behaviour something of the deep-seated values of individual cultures” (p. 12). Johnson (2008) held that politeness is important across many social contexts, including interpersonal relationships and, most applicable here, business

interactions. All in all, scholars generally agree that politeness phenomena are socially important and worthy of study (Eelen, 2001; Gibbons, 2008).

A logical place to begin an investigation of politeness is the model credited with sparking and fanning research on the subject: Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory.

Brown and Levinson

While Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson's theory on politeness was not the first on the subject – a distinction reserved for Robin Lakoff, “the mother of modern politeness theory” (Eelen, 2001, p. 2) – it is the most influential. It is also nearly synonymous with the word *politeness* itself (Eelen). Scholars have acknowledged its “dominant status” (Haugh, 2010, p. 7), calling the theory a “great achievement” (O’Driscoll, 2007, p. 465), a “theoretical basis” for communication studies (Johnson, Roloff & Riffée, 2004, p. 347), and “a guiding beacon for scholars” (Locher & Watts, 2005, p. 9). The model has been applied in a tremendous amount of politeness research (Arundale, 2006; Haugh, 2010; Johnson, Roloff & Riffée, 2004; O’Driscoll, 2007; Xie, He & Lin, 2005), from the nature of requests (Duthler, 2006) to studies on the Shona of Zimbabwe (Mashiri, 2009) to Thai business letters (Chakorn, 2006) to communicative behaviors on a Hong Kong minibus (Gibbons, 2008).

Put forth in 1978 and expounded upon in the 1987 book *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory holds that human interaction is negotiated with two universal desires in mind: that to be appreciated and that to be free of imposition. All “Model Persons” (MPs) have a *positive* and *negative* face, and will choose means that satisfy their ends (Brown & Levinson, 1987). These two global concerns have also been labeled *Be clear* and *Be polite* (Lakoff, 1977), *Concern for clarity* and *Concern with support* (Greene & Lindsey, 1989), and *Directness* and *Politeness* (Blum-Kulka, 1987) (as cited in Min-

Sun & Bresnahan, 1996). Lakoff (1975) also posited three rules of politeness: formality, through keeping aloof; deference, by giving options; and camaraderie, by showing sympathy.

Like Lakoff's theory, Brown and Levinson's draws from the conflict avoidance aspect of Paul Grice's Cooperative Principle (Arundale, 2006; Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 2006; Eelen, 2001; Locher & Watts, 2005; Watts, 2008; Xie, He & Lin, 2005), which rests on the assumption that people are cooperative and aim to be as informative as possible in communication to achieve a maximally efficient information transfer (Eelen). Brown and Levinson's theory takes a socio-anthropological view of politeness (Watts) and diverges from Lakoff's work in its embrace of Erving Goffman's notion of "face" (Arundale, 2006; Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 2006; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Chan, 2007; Darics, 2010; Locher, 2006; Mullany, 2004; O'Driscoll, 2007; Stewart, 2008; Watts, 2008).

Face

Face is the positive social value a person claims for him/herself. It is a person's most personal possession, the center of his security and pleasure (Goffman, 1967). Brown and Levinson (1987) conceptualized face as "something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (p. 61).

Goffman (1967) held that *face* is based on the *line* a person performs, which is a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts s/he uses to express his/her view of the situation and his/her evaluation of the participants involved, including his/herself. Face must be constantly tended to, an idea Goffman explored through the prism of constructing a theory of social interaction, not politeness (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 2006). But Brown and Levinson sought to reduce Goffman's theory to focus on ways *politeness* is used as *face-work* – the actions a person takes to make whatever s/he is doing consistent with face (Goffman). Their model of politeness attempts

to account for how each individual negotiates his/her face needs while recognizing the needs of others.

Face Needs

Brown and Levinson (1987) treated the aspects of face as basic wants or needs, “which every member [of society] knows every other member desires, and which in general it is in the interests of every member to partially satisfy” (p. 62). The researchers separated these face needs into two categories: *positive face* and *negative face*.

Positive face

Positive face is “the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated or approved of) claimed by interactants” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). The authors claimed the most salient aspect of a person’s personality in interactions is what that personality requires of others, specifically the desire to be ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired (Brown & Levinson). The concept of positive face is multidimensional, as it pertains to a range of characteristics, actions and possessions of which the individual desires others to appreciate (Wilson, Kim & Meischke, 1991/1992).

Negative face

Negative face is “the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. freedom of action and freedom from imposition” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). Unlike positive face, negative face is a “unidimensional concept” (Wilson, Kim & Meischke, 1991/1992, p. 220), since it pertains to “very restricted aspects of [a hearer’s] self image, centering on his want to be unimpeded” (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 70).

Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs)

Some communicative behaviors intrinsically threaten one's face. Brown and Levinson (1987) termed these behaviors "face-threatening acts" (p. 25), or FTAs. Speech acts like requests, refusals and directives seem to be inherently face-threatening (Chakorn, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Mashiri, 2009; Wilson, Kim & Meischke, 1991/1992), however deciphering when a message becomes a face-threat, what makes up a face-threat, or the distribution of responsibility between interactants to identify a face-threat has induced much follow-up investigation (Johnson, Roloff & Riffée, 2004; O'Driscoll, 2007; Wilson, Kim & Meischke, 1991/1992).

Brown and Levinson (1987) devised five strategies for doing an FTA: (1) don't do the FTA; (2) go "on record," which makes clear to participants what communicative intention led to the act, for example "I promise to come tomorrow" (p. 69); (3) go "off record," which allows for "more than one unambiguously attributable intention so the actor cannot be held to have committed him/herself to one particular intent," for example "I'm out of cash, I forgot to go to the bank today" (p. 69); (4) state intentions "baldly, without redress," which involves doing an act in the most direct, clear, unambiguous way possible, for example "Do your homework!" (p. 69); and (5) perform "redressive action" in the form of *positive* or *negative* politeness, both of which *give face* to the addressee in an attempt to counteract potential face damage.

Positive politeness

When a threat to one's desire to be approved or liked (positive face) is unavoidable, utilizing *positive politeness* to soften the speech act helps alleviate some corresponding face-threat. This measure is oriented toward the positive face of the hearer and seeks to minimize the potential positive face threat (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Negative politeness

Positive politeness is considered less polite than *negative politeness* (Morand, 1996). Negative politeness helps mitigate threats to one's desire to be unimpeded or un-intruded upon (negative face). This measure is essentially avoidance-based. Negative politeness strategies involve assurances that the speaker recognizes and respects the addressee's negative face-wants and will not interfere with the addressee's freedom of action (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Speech devices

Within the two instances where a form of politeness is used, certain speech devices are employed. These include the use of the conditional, the use of the ambivalent *on*, hedging, and giving justifications for the unhappy situation, among many others (Stewart, 2008). Brown and Levinson (1987) put forth 15 positive politeness strategies that fall under three broad dimensions: claiming common ground, conveying that speaker and hearer are cooperators, and fulfilling the hearer's want. Conveying common ground can be accomplished by conveying the same want or goal as the hearer, stressing common membership in a group, or claiming a shared perspective without necessarily referring to in-group membership (Brown & Levinson). The strategies include exaggerating interest, seeking agreement, being optimistic, giving or asking for reasons, and assuming or asserting reciprocity.

Assuming one chooses to commit a FTA, there are five overarching negative politeness strategies: be direct; don't presume/assume; don't coerce; communicate a want to not impinge on the hearer; and redress additional wants of the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Like enacting positive politeness, there are 15 strategies that fall under these five overarching strategies to perform negative politeness, including minimizing threat, apologizing, giving deference, and being pessimistic (Brown & Levinson).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), a person identifies which of these methods to use when delivering an FTA based on to their original formula: $Wx = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + Rx$, where “the amount of work (W) one puts into being polite depends on the social distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H), plus the power (P) of the hearer over the speaker, plus the risk (R) of hurting the other person” (Yabucchi, 2006, p. 327).

Criticism of Brown and Levinson’s model

While Brown and Levinson’s theory blazed a path for research into politeness, it has also been met with criticism. The authors (1987) themselves acknowledged its shortcomings: “Work on interaction as a system thus remains a fundamental research priority, and the area from which *improved conceptualizations of politeness* [emphasis added] are likely to emerge” (p. 48).

Whether it be claims regarding the theory’s oversimplification or generalization (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Locher & Watts, 2005; O’Driscoll, 2007; Wilson, Kim & Meischke, 1991/1992; Xie, He & Lin, 2005); its failure to account for impoliteness or (im)politeness (Bousfield, 2006; Culpeper 1996, 2005; Eelen, 2001); its dedication to speakers’ conceptualizations of politeness over those of hearers’ (Johnson, Rolfos & Riffe, 2004; Yabuuchi, 2006); its failure to differentiate politeness dynamics among cultures (Ogiermann, 2009); or its internal inconsistencies and shaky epistemological foundations (O’Driscoll, 2007), Brown and Levinson’s ideas have been dissected in a number of ways.

Oversimplification

Brown and Levinson seem to oversimplify politeness’ complex sociological dimensions (Xie, He & Lin, 2005). Their claim that politeness is an embellishment of social interaction may be naïve (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 2006) and their handling of directives too orthodox (Wilson, Kim & Meischke (1991/1992). O’Driscoll (2007) stated that, when conceiving of face

limits, Brown and Levinson's lack of emphasis on situation contingency limits its value when analyzing real-life talk-in-interaction. The authors' theory also fails to distinguish between threats to a speaker's and hearer's face (Johnson, Roloff & Riffée, 2004) as well as assumes that a given speech act will threaten only positive or negative face (Mashiri, 2009).

Locher (2006) held that "no utterance is inherently polite" (p. 251) and Arundale (2006) borrowed this point and applied it to face threats. More accurate terms for these types of messages have been suggested, such as *appropriate* or *politic* (Locher, 2006; Meier, 1995; Watts, 1989). Locher and Watts (2005) and Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011) argued that Brown and Levinson's theory actually isn't one of politeness at all, but of facework. Finally, Mullany (2004) claimed that since Brown and Levinson base their theory on the avoidance of FTAs, there is no way to account for occasions when the speaker intends to be uncooperative.

Impoliteness or (im)politeness

Gino Eelen undertook perhaps the most wide-ranging criticism of politeness theories in general in his 2001 aptly titled book, *Critique of Politeness Theories*. He argued that, among other things, these theories suffer conceptually because they value what is polite more than what is impolite or sometimes, in the case of Brown and Levinson's model, neglect impoliteness altogether (Eelen, 2001; Haugh, 2010, Mullany, 2004; Stewart, 2008; Watts, 2003).

Watts (2003), like Eelen, sought to include impoliteness by outlining two distinct ways of discussing the subject. (Im)polite behavior evaluated by lay members of a language community is "(im)politeness₁", while "(im)politeness₂" is the theoretical term in a universal theory of politeness that refers to forms of social behavior that preserve mutually shared consideration for others (Xie, He & Lin, 2005). In later years, Watts (2008) stated that being polite is not simply

the avoidance of its inverse, impoliteness, but the avoidance of “a state of conflict, face-threat or communicative discord” (p. 290).

Cultural generality

Ogierman (2009) took issue with Brown and Levinson’s universal description of the social implications of speech acts and the strategies available for their use, stating that research has shown that the pragmatic force of utterances differs across languages. O’Driscoll (2007) addressed the concept of “universal” from the perspective of negative face, asserting this aspect of Brown and Levinson’s theory has been found to be non-existent in many cultures. Negative face connotes the notion of an individualistic self, which contradicts eastern conceptualizations as self as collective (Mashiri, 2009). Mashiri’s findings “called into question the appropriateness of the universality of Brown and Levinson’s...model” (p. 138). Use of negative politeness has also been found to differ when making requests in Thai and non-Thai cultures (Chakorn, 2009).

In terms of face, Eslami-Rasekh (2004) stated the concept as defined by Brown and Levinson does not seem to be universally applicable. In his study on the Shona of Zimbabwe, Mashiri (2009) held that face is subject to cultural elaboration depending on the particular society and that Brown and Levinson’s claims “do not adequately account for some non-western polite behavior” (p. 128).

Blum-Kulka (1982), Gu (1990) and Ide (1982) also studied politeness from cultural lenses: Chinese, Japanese and Israeli-Jewish, respectively (Eelen, 2001). Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (2006) lamented Brown and Levinson’s habit of “overlook[ing] the social-embeddedness of ‘polite behaviour,’ which has implications for cross-cultural research” (p. 14).

Brown and Levinson may have given cultural considerations short shrift, but prior research does confirm the importance of minimizing imposition – i.e., protecting one’s negative

face – in many cultures (Min-Sun & Bresnahan, 1996). Yabuuchi (2006) attempted to resolve Brown and Levinson's cultural oversight by modifying their original formula to incorporate culture's variable. In this revised version, $Wx = *_1D(S,H) + *_2P(H,S) + *_3Rx$, $*_1$, $*_2$, and $*_3$ represent, respectively, the weights of D, P, and R in * culture (Yabuuchi).

Addressing Criticisms

Despite how unfashionable it has become to make probabilistic statements about differences in politeness, Gibbons (2009) found that politeness research can not only be done, but can produce interesting results. Most telling, the majority of extant research is guided by Brown and Levinson's seminal theory (Johnson, 2008). The authors' model has been used to investigate politeness in service encounters (Lambert, 1996; Kong, 1998b; Pan, 200b), institutional settings (Roberts, 1992; Jameson, 2003); bicultural and multicultural workplaces (Clyne, 1994; Miller, 1994); and, most applicable to this study, the dynamics of communication in workplaces and business meetings (Hobbs, 2003; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Morand & Ocker, 2002; Mullany, 2004). The theory has also spurred the advancement of politeness study, including works by Arundale (1999), Eelen (2001), Fraser (1990), Held (1995), Holmes (1995), Haugh (2010), Locher (2004) Meier (1990), Spencer-Oatey (2005) and Watts (2003). The authors' theory is not likely to be cast aside anytime soon, either. Watts (2003) wrote, "Brown and Levinson's work will undoubtedly continue to exert as much influence on research into [politeness] in the coming years as it has in the past" (p. 10).

Locher (2004) held that much of the criticism for Brown and Levinson's notion of face is due to many critics being unaware of the two levels underlying the theory: the first being the innermost part of an individual that simultaneously needs to communicate and maintain privacy, and the second being the external mask an individual presents. She added that regardless of

criticism, the overall importance of Brown and Levinson's contribution to the understanding of relational work cannot be devalued.

Countering claims of culture overgeneralization, Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1990) stated it was "fair to assume that *all* [emphasis added] societies have some version of norms that define 'polite behavior'; in this sense, politeness is universal" (p. 16). Ayodabo (2007) agreed, asserting that politeness is a pervasive phenomenon in all communities. Watts (2003) attempted to rectify the complications of universality by positing that in all human cultures, members will classify certain forms of social behavior as mutually shared consideration for others. O'Driscoll (2007) expanded this notion to include face maintenance, stating that it seems undeniable to claim reciprocal face maintenance is not a universal norm. Mullany (2004) went so far as to say that the influence of Brown and Levinson's theory can be seen even in attempts at revising it.

Other Research on Politeness

Several approaches within the social constructionist paradigm challenge the dominant status of Brown and Levinson's theory, such as Locher and Watt's (2005) discursive approach, Eelen's (2001) postmodern approach, Arundale's (1999) interactional approach, and Spencer-Oatey's (2005) social psychological approach (Haugh, 2010).

Locher (2004) couched politeness as *facework* or *relational work*, preferring the latter because it highlights the involvement of at least two interactants and covers the entire continuum from polite and appropriate to impolite and inappropriate behavior. Her work is particularly applicable to the present research as she examined the interaction of power and politeness in various settings, including business meetings. She believed politeness calls for a qualitative approach to data that takes the dynamics of the interaction into account. As such, I will draw on her research and coding methods extensively in the next section.

Eelen (2001) stipulated that all approaches to politeness are based in one way or another on the notions of norms, culture and sharedness of expectations (Locher, 2004). He held that concepts of politeness are more than the result of a passive learning process in which each person accepts a politeness system. Instead, they are active expressions of a person's social positioning in relation to others and the world in general. He wrote, "Politeness becomes an argumentative social tool with which people ethically 'structure' or 'represent' the world that surrounds them" (p. 227). This idea has applications in the present study as dominance has also been conceptualized as a practice and something people "do" to one another.

With help from Locher, Watts argued for a discursive and relational understanding of the norms of appropriate social conduct as established by a given group (Locher & Watts, 2005; Luchjenbroers & Aldridge-Waddon, 2011). They posited that the focus should be on the discursive struggle in which the interactants engage (Locher & Watts, 2005). The authors put forth a four-point scale of relative politeness judgments that treats appropriateness and politeness as separate factors (Luchjenbroers & Aldridge-Waddon). This scale entails: "(i) Impolite and inappropriate (i.e., rude) conduct; (ii) (non)polite and appropriate conduct; (iii) polite and appropriate conduct; and (iv), over-polite and inappropriate or not polite conduct" (Luchjenbroers & Aldridge-Waddon, p. 23).

Like Brown and Levinson, Geoffrey Leech drew inspiration from Grice's Cooperative Principle (Locher & Watts, 2005), but his theory of politeness departs from others in its broader distinction between semantics and pragmatics (Eelen, 2001). Semantics focuses on a sentence's abstract logical meaning or sense, while pragmatics is concerned with the relationship between the sense of a sentence and its pragmatic force (Eelen). Leech also adds the Politeness Principle, which consists of six maxims aimed at strategic conflict avoidance (Locher & Watts).

Yueguo Gu's concept of politeness introduced an aspect of the subject not found in other frameworks: it connects politeness with moral societal norms (Eelen, 2001). Sachiko Ide posited a politeness theory based on the Japanese concept of politeness. She envisioned politeness as involved in maintaining smooth communication and critiqued Brown and Levinson's model for being too concerned with strategic interaction (Eelen).

Horst Arndt and Richard Janney put forth an interpersonal framework of politeness with a focus on people as the determining factor of politeness. They railed against the idea of an *appropriacy-based* approach to politeness, where politeness is a manner of using the correct words in the correct contexts as determined by conventional rules (Eelen, 2001).

Politeness and Power

Brown and Levinson considered power so instrumental in politeness usage that they included it as variable *P* in their formula that determines the level of politeness a speaker will use when addressing another. Following Brown and Levinson, the use of politeness to gain power has been the subject of much research (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 2006; Locher, 2006; Morand, 1996). Holmes and Stubbe (2003) specifically examined politeness and power's relationship in workplace settings, devoting a chapter to their interplay during business meetings. As previously mentioned, Locher (2004) also investigated power and politeness in action, including during business meetings. Mullany (2004) examined power in meetings as well, stating that this setting is ideal to examine power in workplace interactions. Halbe (2011) claimed relative power, along with social distance and the ranking of the imposition, influences politeness strategies. Morand (1996) found that people systematically varied speech according to their perception of the social distribution of power.

Schnurr and Chan (2009) tied power's relationship to politeness based on an organization's culture. The authors stated that the role of culture is especially applicable in workplace settings, where norms of appropriate ways of integrating the competing discourses of power and politeness are strongly influenced by cultural expectations. Paramasivam (2007) found speech acts that displayed politeness also exercised power. She wrote, "Politeness is often a tool to soften the exercise of power, implying that power and politeness are interdependent moves" (p. 100). The close proximity between power and dominance will be reviewed in the next section, thus Paramasivam's point is especially persuasive in support of the present study.

Dominance

Like politeness, dominance has been afforded various definitions, including a quality of an individual, such as holding a preeminent or ascendant position; an interactional and relationally-based process that lessens the communication role of another; and a tactic for exercising the most interpersonal control or influence (Burgoon, Johnson & Koch, 1998). Dunbar defined dominance dyadically and interactionally as "expressive, relationally based strategies and as one set of communicative acts through which power is exerted and influence achieved" (p. 237). Palmer (1989) noted that interpersonal dominance is a momentary state associated with temporal displays of behavior rather than a more permanent, individual or social characteristic.

Burgoon, et al. (1998) identified four prominent aspects of dominance: persuasiveness and social skills related to conveying poise; conversational control (floor dominance) and panache; focus on the conversation and task at hand; and self-assurance, or a lack of concern with self-presentation; and perhaps arrogance or brashness. Some scholars view dominance as a personality trait, but when considered from a communication standpoint, it is a dynamic state

that combines individual temperament and situational features that encourage dominant behavior (Dunbar, 2004). As such, dominance has been found to be a reflection of one's social skills (Burgoon & Le Poire, 1999).

Social Skills

Burgoon and Hoobler (2002) asserted that a strong positive correlation between social skills and dominance exists, such that higher skilled individuals are more likely to portray dominance displays toward their goals and in response to the demands of certain circumstances. Skillful interaction patterns often lead to observations of dominance (Burgoon & Hoobler, 2000). In a study on perceptions of competence, Anderson and Kilduff (2009) found that dominant individuals act in ways that make them seem both expert at the task and socially skilled. These same individuals truly seem to have more competence than their less dominant teammates (Anderson & Kilduff).

In a study seeking to establish a balanced perspective of dominance, Burgoon and Dunbar (2000) found that those who believe they have greater social skills are perceived as more dominant by interaction partners. Brandt (1980) bolstered the connection between dominance and social skills when he conceptualized dominance as “an attribute in terms of which certain verbal and nonverbal behaviors are reformulated and made socially intelligible” (p. 32).

Interpersonal dominance relates strongly to one's degree of social skills because characteristics of dominant individuals include charisma, confidence, persuasiveness, pride, and enthusiasm (Burgoon, Johnson & Koch, 1998; Burgoon & Le Poire, 1999; Mignault & Chaudhuri, 2003; Notarantonio & Cohen, 1990). These attributes enable an individual to communicate more dynamically with others, which builds more favorable impressions among interactants. Positive correlations between social skills and dominance displays make clear that

in western cultures, preference is given to the dominant rather than the submissive end of the behavioral spectrum (Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000).

Notarantonio and Cohen (1990) illustrated dominance's value in the professional world when they studied what makes an effective salesperson. The researchers found that buyers prefer to do business with salespeople who are confident and enthusiastic – characteristics of dominance. The researchers also found that adaptive behavior appears to be a required condition for effective managerial performance.

Distinguished from Power

While the differences may appear subtle, power and dominance are indeed distinct communicative constructs (Aguinis, Simonsen and Pierce, 2001; Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Burgoon, Johnson and Koch, 1998; Dunbar & Abra, 2010). Literature does acknowledge the close association of the two, however (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Burgoon, Johnson and Koch, 1998; Dunbar & Abra, 2010; Notarantonio & Cohen, 1990). This fact is especially applicable to this study, since the research connecting power to politeness can in some ways be extended to dominance.

Power is more closely associated with aggression, whereas dominance is more socially acceptable (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Burgoon, et al., 1998). Dunbar and Abra (2010) separated power from dominance by claiming power is the ability to influence while dominance is a relationally-based behavior based on the context and motives of those involved. The authors continued, "The more powerful someone is, the more dominance he or she will exert through control attempts" (p. 6). Burgoon, Johnson and Koch (1998) supported the notion that dominance can lead to power, and is thus separate from power, by noting that dominance is not an exclusive route to power but rather one of several means by which power is effectuated. Wartenberg

(1990) echoed this concept by differentiating between three types of power – force, coercion and influence – and regarding dominance not among them but rather as a special use of these types of power. Finally, Notarantonio and Cohen (1990) found that a dominant individual appears to be more forceful and Aguinis, Simonsen and Pierce (2001) linked the two in terms of credibility.

Differentiating dominance and power is aided by reviewing other characteristics of dominance in the literature. The words “charm” and “charisma” are often used. Both power and dominance have elements of persuasion (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Burgoon, Johnson & Koch, 1998; Dunbar & Abra, 2010; Notarantonio & Cohen, 1990), but dominance implies a more savvy pursuit of personal goals than power. Perhaps the clearest distinction comes from Dunbar (2004), who contrasted power and dominance by stating that the former can be latent and thus not explicitly exercised, but dominance is necessarily manifest and wholly context- and relationship-dependent. In other words, the existence of dominance relies on the submission of others.

Reciprocity

Since the efficacy of a dominant tactic depends on how it is perceived, (Mignault & Chaudhuri, 2003), a dyad is necessary at minimum for dominance to occur. In fact, it could be said that the conveyance of dominance *relies on the non-dominant party*, because the sender and receiver work together to establish dominance and submission (Brandt, 1980; Boucher, Hancock & Dunham, 2008; Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000; Burgoon, Johnson & Koch, 1998; Mignault & Chaudhuri, 2003; Youngquist, 2009). Brandt (1980) held that dominance behaviors are recognized and interpreted by observers as part of the speaker’s attempt to increase his/her control of an interaction relative to the other. Courtright, Millar-Rogers and Rogers (1979) supported this notion, stating that *relational control* is an aspect of message exchange by which

interactants reciprocally define their positions relative to each other. Thus, for dominance to occur in an interaction, one person must be willing to assume a less influential role in the exchange than the other.

Interestingly, the dominant/submissive dynamic does not necessarily impact the “lesser” party negatively. Burgoon, Johnson and Koch (1998) believed that dominance and submission displays helped support the process of social organization and even promoted survival of the species. The authors claimed these displays may actually benefit submissive members. The process is a dynamic one, based on a variety of situational factors (Boucher, Hancock & Dunham, 2008; Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000; Miller, 1980). This claim harkens back to dominance as a measure of a person’s social skills, since a unique awareness of the situation is required to enact a dominance display.

Leadership

The traits associated with interpersonal dominance echo those associated with leadership. Displaying leadership qualities is imperative in business meetings. Dominance can produce social influence, and social influence has been linked to the ability to persuade others, to elicit compliance, and to move people into action (Burgoon, Johnson & Koch, 1998).

A major factor in establishing a leader is his or her ability to influence, and dominant individuals tend to exert more influence (Aguinis, Simonsen & Pierce, 2001; Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000; Koch, Baehne, Kruse, Zimmerman & Zumbach, 2010). Research suggests that trait dominance leads to influence in real-world groups where stakes are high and that those higher in trait dominance tend to attain more influence in face-to-face groups than others (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009). Research has also linked credibility to dominance, and credibility enhances one’s ability to influence others (Aguinis, Simonsen & Pierce, 2011).

Advice giving also appears to be competitive communication that attempts to appear superior (Madlock & Booth-Butterfield, 2012).

Dominance does have its negative connotations. Unfavorable facial expressions such as contempt can convey dominance (Dabbs, 1997). Some researchers have noted the general perception of dominance as a negative and/or dysfunctional behavior (Burgoon, Johnson & Koch, 1998; Youngquist, 2009). While these perceptions were disputed and mostly refuted in the extant literature, the fact that dominance can be undesirable underscores the potential benefit of using politeness measures to offset negative perceptions.

Politeness and Dominance in Business Meetings

Business meeting management is a dynamic process in which all participants play a part, whether cooperative or resistant (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). For a speaker, the difficulty lies in trying to maintain balance between arguing a point and protecting one's own and/or the addressee's face (Locher, 2004). This yin and yang suggests the interplay of politeness and dominance can be readily observed during business meetings. Both dominance and politeness have also been described as behavioral and relational (Dunbar, 2004).

Business meetings typically involve several professionals sharing perspectives about topics concerning organizational sustainability and success. During these meetings, attendees may need to vie for the floor to express a viewpoint, which may involve enacting polite or dominant tactics. Findings suggest the person who controls the topic through dominance controls the conversation (Palmer, 1989). By claiming a share of the conversational space, an interactant can express opinions, gather information, solicit affective or instrumental responses, persuade, define self-images, and solve problems (Palmer). Attendees of business meetings may also need to concede the floor to others and engage in arguments, a goal of which is to display dominance

(Hample, Warner & Norton, 2006). Hample, et al. (2006) found ratings of argument quality are affected by politeness usage, with polite arguments generally judged more positively.

Mignault and Chaudhuri (2003) suggested a regular use of dominance may benefit professionals since dominance displays reinforce dominant status, which leads to priority in access to resources. Youngquist (2009) added that behavior associated with dominance may need to be experienced repeatedly and/or in sequence to be optimally perceived among interactants. Anderson and Kilduff (2009) touched on politeness' role in dominance when they found that dominant individuals may ascend group hierarchies by appearing helpful to the group's overall success as opposed to aggressively grabbing power.

Politeness was found to be quite pervasive in various workplaces (Halbe, 2011) and interpersonal relationships between coworkers are among the most inevitable aspects of an organization (Madlock & Booth-Butterfield, 2012). Thus, it is logical to examine the possible interaction between dominance and politeness during business meetings where the dynamics of these relationships are readily observable.

Communications theorists stress that speakers have goals that induce communicative behaviors (Min-Sun & Bresnahan, 1996). Schnurr and Chan (2009) held that those in leadership positions face a range of specific expectations about what are effective and appropriate behaviors in terms of performance within the context in which they operate. During business meetings, one of these expectations may be exhibiting dominance, but doing so may validate a speaker's face at the expense of the hearer's. Politeness measures may be used to enact this dominance while softening the threat to the other's face.

The use of politeness by participants of business meetings toward dominance could depend on the extent of the formality and public accessibility of the meeting. The more formal

and publicly accessible, the subtler the dominance tactics may be, which could mean politeness is used to a greater extent to accomplish these tactics. In what is perhaps the definitive book on politeness in the workplace, Holmes and Stubbe (2003) underscored the value of observing business meetings. The authors wrote:

There are definite...patterns in how meetings are structured and the ways in which people manage the relational aspects of meetings....These practices encompass not only agreed ways of running meetings and reaching decisions, but also include ways of doing relational work and paying attention to politeness considerations at work (p. 86).

Several other scholars also examined the subject. Mullany (2004) investigated politeness and humor as a tactic to gain compliance in business meetings; Halbe (2011) examined the relationship between hierarchy and politeness in the military workplace; Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (2006) reviewed the challenges of politeness at work; and Locher (2004) studied power and politeness in action during disagreements in business meetings. Politeness research has also extended into virtual work teams (Darics, 2010) and email communication (Duthler, 2006; Haugh, 2010; and Luchjenbroers & Aldridge-Waddon, 2011).

Communities of Practice

The Communities of Practice (CofP) model has already proven valuable in comparing and contrasting how power and politeness plays out in organizations or work teams (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). Recognizing the relationship between dominance and power, CofP is also a helpful model to utilize when considering the interaction of politeness and dominance in business meetings.

Proposed by Wenger (1998), a community of practice is a group of people who have been engaged in a common set of tasks over a period of time and experience a sense of “mutual

engagement,” “a joint enterprise” and “a shared repertoire” (p. 73). Meagher-Stewart, Solberg, Warner, MacDonald, McPherson and Seaman (2012) wrote that leadership and appropriate membership, regularly scheduled events, and a commitment to an issue about which members feel enthusiastic are among the successful attributes of CofP. In this sense, members of a group who engage in regular formal business meetings constitute a CofP. Mullany (2004) also confirmed that Wenger’s three criteria are evident in these settings.

Classifying the group I will observe – a board of school directors – as a CofP is important because it allows for more accurate and reliable identification of polite and dominant behaviors particular to that group. Mullany (2004) wrote, “A discourse-based approach to politeness is viable through a CofP framework, and the CofP approach also enables notions of linguistic impoliteness to be conceived” (p. 17). Mills (2002) argued that a CofP framework enables a “more flexible and complex” model of politeness to be considered (p. 69). As a CofP, the school board members negotiate meaning, preserve and create knowledge, spread information, and establish identities (Wenger, 1998). Furthermore, by undertaking these tasks in community events such as public meetings, the board members encourage people to tangibly experience being part of the community, to recognize the level of sophistication the community brings to the technical discussion at hand, to rally around key principles, and to see how the board – and the public – influences the school district (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). Achieving these objectives through negotiation of speech acts is an endeavor distinct to the CofP, so examining how the school board takes up these objectives should provide rich data.

Also, by labeling the board a CofP, it allows for consideration of the social identity theory, which holds that dedicated group discussion bolsters the social identity of the group (Hopthrow & Hulbert, 2005). This enhanced identity is thought to increase the value placed on

the welfare of others in the group and thereby increase the level of cooperative choice in the group (Hopthrow & Hulbert). Concern with the welfare of others and being cooperative may lead to more uses of politeness during the heated discussions and attempts at dominance that take place during formal business meetings. CofP also allows for a social constructionist approach, which frames communication as an instrumental process in creating social worlds instead of simply an activity performed within them (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003).

Emergent Networks and Coding

When observing the three school board business meetings, I will draw on the concept of emergent networks (ENs) to distinguish and examine sequences of interactions for possible interplay between politeness and dominance. First introduced by Watts in 1991 and later used by Locher (2004) to examine power and politeness, emergent networks change or maintain the latent networks established between people during previous encounters. The reproduction or alteration of dominance and politeness symmetries will therefore take place in these emergent networks. While latent networks mostly remain dormant during speech events, an emergent network is only observable during ongoing interaction and is limited in duration (Locher). This allows for a more detailed review of the dynamics of ongoing conversation.

In order to set boundaries for the emergent networks that occur during the lengthy discussions constituting the selected business meetings, I draw on the notions of topic development and floor occupation (Locher, 2004; Watts, 1991) – criteria that can lead to ENs that are only a couple turns long. Thus, it is possible to use ENs to refer to both an entire speech event as well as emerging smaller units within that event. By locating, differentiating and dissecting certain ENs, I can thoroughly investigate where dominance and politeness may intermingle within the space of a larger interaction.

Data was analyzed from three consecutive board meetings each conceptualized as a unique CofP within the larger CofP of “the school board.” Polite and dominant maneuvers on the utterance-by-utterance level were examined by transcribing each board meeting from the beginning to the end of the business portion of the agenda. This process was twofold, with an initial review and transcription of each business meeting based on the audio recordings and a proofing review and confirmation based on a second review of the audio. Each utterance was then consecutively numbered and ENs identified through open then axial coding for a deeper analysis. Non-business agenda items, such as one-sided presentations and individual public comment, were omitted from transcription and analysis as these activities do not allow for investigation of dominant and polite displays because both dominance and politeness require at least two interactants to take place.

Once the ENs were identified, individual polite and dominant speech acts were coded and quantified using the below criteria and measured against the totality of the EN. Certain passages within the EN were further examined for possible interplay between politeness and dominance.

Identifying politeness

There are certain linguistic markers that constitute polite talk and are used to soften threats to a speaker’s and/or hearer’s face. While the intricacies of these markers may differ among cultures, the present study examines speech among natural-born United States citizens only, thus eliminating the need to consider cultural politeness distinctions. Therefore, it is possible to utilize and combine a variety of research on these markers, since most, if not all, politeness study is grounded in Western behaviors. Brown and Levinson (1987) realized the value of this approach, stating that had the degree of detailed information on particular linguistic realizations of politeness strategies been available when they first put forth their original theory

in 1978, their account of politeness in action “would doubtless have been more precise and better founded” (p. 28).

To measure these linguistic politeness tactics in the observed business meetings, I drew upon work by Brown and Levinson (1987), Locher (2004), and Watts (2003). Scholarly articles concerning the specific politeness tactics were also reviewed.

Expressions of procedural meaning (EPMs)

Watts (2003) coined “expressions of procedural meaning,” or EPMs, as “responsible for triggering inferences in the addressee that bear on interpersonal meaning or instruct[ing] the addressee where and how to derive inference from propositional values” (p. 182). In other words, EPMs are linguistic expressions that signal procedural meaning. In one sense, they are formulaic, ritualized utterances. In another, they are semi-formulaic and drawn from a range of utterances that have become pragmaticalized. It is the latter group that most informs this study, as they are part of the politeness behavior of different forms of linguistic practice. Watts wrote, “When [EPMs] are missing, their absence is easily interpretable as impoliteness, and *when they are in excess* [emphasis added] of what is required by the situation, they are easily interpretable as politeness” (p. 182). The highlighted portion of the preceding quote supports this paper’s position that quantifying the EPMs expressed in the observed board meetings allows for determinations of politeness’ use toward dominance.

The EPMs I will focus on – and those most represented in the work of Brown and Levinson, Locher, and other politeness scholars – are hedges, modal auxiliaries, hesitators, and point-of-view distancers/responsibility shifters.

Hedges

Of all the linguistic politeness techniques, none have received as much attention as

hedges. Brown and Levinson (1987) devoted nearly 30 pages to the devices, which are features of both positive and negative politeness. The authors wrote that hedging assumptions or assertions – in other words, avoiding commitment to them – is a fundamental method of disarming routine interactional threats. They defined a hedge as:

A particle, word or noun phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set; it says of that membership that it is *partial*, or true only in certain respects, or that it is *more* true and complete than perhaps might be expected” (p. 145).

Locher (2004) explained hedges as a way to hesitate before choosing, comment on what one is thinking, or abbreviate or condense information. Aijmer (1986) wrote that “hedges make it possible to comment on one’s message while one is producing it either ‘prospectively’ or ‘retrospectively’” (p. 14). Watts (2003) and House and Kasper (1981) separated hedges into finer categories, including solidarity markers/pragmatic particles (“you know”), committers (“I think...”), and downtoners (“just”). For the purposes of this study, I will term all related utterances as “hedges.”

In the positive politeness sense, hedges are used to make an asserted opinion “safely vague” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 116) or weaken its force (Watts, 2003). This allows a speaker to retract or recreate an utterance should it be met with disapproval. In the negative politeness sense, hedges are used to make utterances more polite (Ayodabo, 2007). This can be done through performative hedges, which weaken the illocutionary force of a statement by means of attitudinal precedents or adverbs (Brown & Levinson; Watts, 2003); quality hedges, which suggest that the speaker is not taking full responsibility for the truth of his/her utterance; and quantity hedges, which give notice that not as much or not as precise information is provided as might be expected. Hedges are also employed to downtone the act of advising (Locher, 2006).

<i>Table 3: Sample Hedges</i>		
Hedges	Quality Hedges	Quantity Hedges
<i>Well</i>	<i>I (don't) think/believe</i>	<i>More or less</i>
<i>Sort/kind/type of</i>	<i>I would say</i>	<i>Approximately</i>
<i>Let me/us</i>	<i>You might say</i>	<i>All in all</i>
<i>You know</i>	<i>Quite frankly</i>	<i>So to speak</i>
<i>Just</i>	<i>As you know</i>	<i>Basically</i>
<i>I mean</i>	<i>It seems that</i>	<i>To some extent</i>
<i>Maybe</i>	<i>It appears</i>	<i>Actually</i>
<i>I don't know</i>	<i>To be honest</i>	<i>Really</i>

Modal auxiliaries

In the right context, modal auxiliaries *can, could, may, might, should* and *would* act as politeness devices. They can be used to soften face-threatening acts, ask for permission or indicate something is possible, express probability or hypothetical meaning, and express putative, hypothetical or tentative meaning (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 1972). Called *consultative devices* by Watts (2003), they “seek to involve the addressee and bid for his/her cooperation” (p. 183). Brown and Levinson (1987) classified modal auxiliaries under both the “Be Conventionally Indirect” and the “Be Pessimistic” strategies of negative politeness, where they are used to indicate that the speaker does not presume that the precondition contained in the utterance is met, where such a presumption may be rude, and/or to provide the hearer with a line

of escape (i.e., [“Would, Could, Might] you pass the salt?” or “[Would, Could, Might] it be easier to...?”).

Hesitators

Also termed “prosodic or kinesic hedges,” the *umms* and *ahhs* and hesitations that indicate a speaker’s attitude toward what s/he is saying are often the most salient clue to the presence of a face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 172). Since they are a characteristic of spoken language, they are not regarded as poor speaking style but as an indicator of the planning process (Locher, 2004). Locher added, “The occurrence of *uhm* and *uh* in front of a word search constitute mitigation in that they try to protect the speaker’s *own* face...[and] help to indicate that the speaker wishes to continue (and hence also act as floor holding devices)” (p. 120). This parenthetical is especially pertinent here as it suggests hesitators can be employed to gain dominance. *Er* and *ah* are also considered hesitators (Watts, 2003).

Point-of-view distancers/responsibility shifters

Locher (2004) identified point-of-view distancers/responsibility shifters as means to allow a speaker to portray him- or herself as not entirely responsible for what s/he is reporting. This involves the use of pronouns such as *they* or *you* to exclude oneself, or *we* and its iterations (*we’ll*, *we’re*, etc.) to spread commitment of the utterance to others. Brown and Levinson (1987) termed this technique point-of-view distancing and stated *you* can be used as deference or distancing and *we* to indicate group inclusion. Particularly applicable in the observed business meetings, *we* is also used to indicate *I + power* and, in certain contexts, can take the form of the business *we* (Brown & Levinson). Locher stated this strategy can be used as a face-protecting device, since the speech act can be refuted as not explicitly the speaker’s point-of-view, and can also mitigate threat to a hearer’s face by softening the effect of a disagreement.

Identifying Dominance

Dominance can be observed in interactional patterns in which one actor's assertion of control is met by acquiescence from another (Dunbar, 2004). Burgoon, Johnson and Koch (1998) held that analyzing relational control through the coding of message sequences in interactions is a generally accepted way of measuring interpersonal dominance. These codes consist of recording one-up, one-down, and leveling moves that take place among interactants (Courtright, Millar & Rogers-Millar, 1979; Dunbar, 2004; Heatherington & Friedlander, 1987). Norton's (1983) dominance style subscale also provides inspiration. It involves three dimensions: forcefulness (directing the course of conversation and taking charge); monopolizing (talking often and talking for long periods); and involvement (not hesitating to speak and expressing oneself freely).

Floor control and turn length

Burgoon, Johnson and Koch (1998) wrote that social dominance may be manifested in indicators such as duration of talk. Simply taking the floor has also been found to suggest dominance (Burgoon & Le Poire, 1999; Pena & Hancock, 2011). Such displays are "bound by relationships, contexts, and time" (Burgoon, Johnson & Koch, p. 311) and can be considered control attempts, which are efforts by one person to change the behavior of another as a means of gaining dominance (Dunbar, 2004). On the other hand, counter-control attempts are responses to control attempts from an individual's interaction partner (Dunbar). Thus, an effective method of measuring dominance is quantifying how long a participant holds the floor compared to the other interactants, how many speaking turns s/he takes, and the reaction of the interactant following the turn.

Floor control was determined by counting the number of words in each turn for each participant during each emergent network. The amount of talk offered by actors in an emergent network has been found to be an indication of dominance (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). The longer the turn and the higher number of lengthy turns indicated a participant's degree of dominance. I considered a "lengthy turn" one that contained 100 utterances or more. Drawing from Palmer (1989), a turn was considered "a set of contiguous, unilateral utterances transcribed and marked for Person A and Person B on the transcript" (p. 6). By extending utterances, and thus turns, participants send relational messages at a micro-momentary level claiming control of the floor. Interruptions were considered a disruption of one's turn by another participant. In the cases when the interrupted participant continued his or her speech act after the interruption, a new turn was designated.

Interruptions

Interruptions are a major indicator of dominance due to their ability to reduce the reciprocal nature of conversation (Burgoon, Johnson & Koch, 1998; Burgoon & Le Poire, 1999; Pena & Hancock, 2011; Youngquist, 2009). The more attempted and successful interruptions a speaker achieves, the more s/he is considered dominant (Burgoon, et al., 1998). Youngquist (2009) found that perceptions of dominance are influenced by intrusive interruptions. These are distinguished from cooperative overlaps, because the latter encourages or supports the current speaker while the former intrudes with the purpose of dominating. Intrusive interruptions will be the focus in the present study.

Repetition

Locher (2004) found that repetition of a speaker's own utterance can serve several functions, the main purposes being to fight for the floor and emphasize one's point-of-view.

Reiterating one's position on a subject and vying for control of the conversation are both attributes of interpersonal dominance. Burgoon and Dunbar (2000) wrote: "The ability to be forceful, persuasive, confident, energetic, and vibrant; *to take initiative and control of conversations* [emphasis added]; to be expressive yet relaxed and poised are all facets of dominance displays" (p. 116). Repetition can also be a means of voicing disagreement (Locher, 2004), which is a type of utterance associated with dominance (Dunbar & Abra, 2010). In this sense, repetitive statements can be used as one-up moves.

One-Up Moves

In their distinction between being domineering and dominance, Courtright, Millar and Rogers-Millar (1979) stated that dominance refers to paired message exchange transactions, while domineering control maneuvers refer to individual message movements. Thus, dominance involves relational control, where "interactors reciprocally define their positions relative to one another" (Courtright, et al., p. 180). The concept of reciprocity was already touched upon, but is repeated to help explain how Courtright, et al.'s Relational Control Coding System (RCCS) – also known as the Relational Communication Control Coding Scheme (RCCCS) – can aid in identifying dominance in an interaction.

RCCS is a three-step process. First, the coder distinguishes messages as grammatical (assertion, question, talk-over, noncomplete, and other) or response (support, nonsupport, extension, answer, instruction, order, disconfirmation, topic change, initiation-termination, and other). Once a communicative exchange is coded, it is assigned a control direction. Messages attempting to assert definitional rights are one-up moves, coded **↑**. Requests or acceptances of the other's definition of the relationship are one-down moves, coded **↓**. Finally, non-demanding, non-accepting, leveling actions are one-across moves, coded **→**. Control directions of each pair

of sequentially ordered turns are combined to form nine transactional types: one-up, one-down complementarity ($\uparrow\downarrow$, $\downarrow\uparrow$); competitive, submissive and neutralized symmetry ($\uparrow\uparrow$, $\downarrow\downarrow$, $\rightarrow\rightarrow$); one-up transitory ($\uparrow\rightarrow$, $\rightarrow\uparrow$) and one-down transitory ($\downarrow\rightarrow$, $\rightarrow\downarrow$) (Courtright, Millar & Rogers-Millar, 1979). Dominance is then defined as “the transmission of one-up messages that are accepted with one-down statements from the other” (Courtright, et al., 1979, p. 181).

For this study, I adopt Dunbar and Burgoon’s (2005) truncated version of the RCC(C)S, which accounts for the most common one-up moves: suggestions (S), demands (D), reasoning (R), ignoring (I) and nonsupport (N). The authors wrote:

Suggestions are messages that involve making suggestions, asking questions, or offering ideas. Demands are unqualified commands with little or no explanation. Reasoning is stating reasons or giving opinions. Ignoring involves any message that ignores or bypasses the request of the previous message or offers silence in response to the partner’s statement. Nonsupportive moves are any messages that are a disagreement, rejection, criticism, or challenge (p. 218).

“But”

When *but* occurs at the beginning of a speaker’s turn, it can be considered an attempt at controlling the floor as well as to oppose a previous speaker’s contribution (Locher, 2006). When used within a turn, it often indicates disagreement and acts as an evaluative device. In this sense, *but* can be a face-threatening act as well as a dominant maneuver. I am most interested in the occasions when *but* is used in conjunction with an interruption to gain the floor and the linguistic devices immediately surrounding it.

Research Question

Drawing from the above politeness and dominance research, the identified EPMS, and the role of politeness and power in business meetings, I will address my central research question:

R₁: Can linguistic devices recognized as “politeness” be used to gain or maintain interpersonal dominance?

In addition to potentially connecting the currently unlinked interpersonal behaviors of politeness and dominance and shedding further light on the nuances of both, addressing this research question also contributes to underrepresented theory on the subjects.

Method

To examine the potential interaction of politeness and dominance during business meetings, I drew from a study by Tracy (2007) that examined discourse occurring in three public meetings of a school board as it confronted a multimillion-dollar budgeting error. Like Asen, Gurke, Solomon, Connors and Gumm (2011), I engaged in ethnographic observation of three, public school board meetings and recorded all interaction, which I then subjected to discourse analysis and coded for politeness and dominance markers based on relevant literature.

Marsh (2005) wrote:

Discourse analysis allows for the rich and nuanced methods needed to investigate how utterances are produced and interpreted in context and how social phenomena, such as politeness or impoliteness, may (or may not) become the participants’ concern in the course of a particular interaction (p. 195).

Morand (1996) added that, through discourse analysis, a researcher can actually predict where politeness behaviors are likely to be most important and thus salient. Watts (2006) also extolled the value of discourse analysis, holding that constructing individual worlds can only be done socially; it can only be carried out through discourse. Mullany (2004) performed a

discourse analysis on formal business meetings and found the method valuable for locating commonly used mitigation tactics to soften the force of less acceptable messages.

In addition to drawing on relevant sources for the coding process, I will also employ the knowledge I've gained through research into politeness and dominance. These methods will allow me to delve deeply into the nature of the spoken interactions and identify patterns of behavior (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis & Piele, 2010).

Source of Data

School boards have been a source of research for at least 22 years. Anderson and Snyder (1980) studied a Texas school board to investigate leadership traits and outlined three key characteristics of the groups that apply to the board observed in the present study:

- (1) School board members provide the highest level of leadership in a school district by determining direction and by setting policy;
- (2) School board members are responsible for addressing community as well as state and federal concerns and subsequently for setting goals that guide all district activity;
- (3) School board members, while representing certain interest groups, must function as a working team to make decisions that are in the best interest of the entire school district (p. 228).

Like Anderson and Snyder (1980), other scholars have acknowledged school boards as uniquely complex organizational groups due to their composition of individuals representing diverse backgrounds and stakeholders (Caster, 2007; Asen, Gurke, Solomon, Connors and Gumm, 2011; Tracy, 2007). Since school boards are both business organizations and democratic bodies, they have more intricate tasks when undertaking their planning methods than other kinds of organizations (Tracy, 2007). Such traits have led researchers to examine the groups

concerning a range communicative behaviors, including navigating race relations (Mease & Terry, 2012), determining language use (Castor, 2007), ebonics (Oakland School Board Resolution on Ebonics, 1998), negotiating budget crises (Tracy, 2007), and reasoning (Asen, et al., 2011).

School boards are also set apart from corporations in how they must handle their relations with the public. The legal requirement for school boards to hold public meetings gives them a communication forum to manage that is absent in other organizations, thereby making the decisions especially consequential (Tracy, 2007). Also, since school board members cannot simply impose requirements but must carefully negotiate the often-conflicting viewpoints of community members (Asen, Gurke, Solomon, Connors and Gumm, 2011), tempering dominance with politeness could be especially useful during in these meetings to sway public opinion.

About the School Board and District

The sample of this study consists of three business meetings of a school board. The meetings are open to the public and occur monthly. In all, 12 individuals took part in the business discussions of each meeting, which were the portions of the meetings under review. Nine of the 12 constitute the board of school directors for the school district (“SD”) at which I am currently employed. Six of the school board members are female – one of whom is board president – and three are male – one of whom is board vice president. These nine are the major focus of this study. The remaining three participants – the SD superintendent, assistant superintendent, and business administrator – are involved in a limited number of the examined ENs.

The school board members are elected by the residents of the township (“T”) every two years. Each serves a 4-year term. The next election will take place November of 2013. At the

conclusion of a board member's term, s/he can choose to enter that year's election for a chance to serve another term or retire from the board. There is no limit to the number of terms a board member can serve. To maintain the SD's and participants' anonymity, I will employ pseudonyms. The list of participants, their position on the board or in SD, their length of term and their gender can be found in the table below. When the data for this study was collected, all board members besides Chris were serving their second or first term.

<i>Table 1: Participants (all names are pseudonyms)</i>			
Name (Pseudonym)	Position	Term	Gender
Beverly	President	2	Female
Ryan	Vice-President	2	Male
Chris	Board Member	16	Male
Evan	Board Member	2	Male
Stephanie	Board Member	2	Female
Polly	Board Member	2	Female
Lauren	Board Member	2	Female
Liza	Board Member	1	Female
Katherine	Board Member	1	Female
Gretchen	Superintendent	N/A	Female
Mary	Assistant Superintendent	N/A	Female
Tony	Business Administrator	N/A	Male

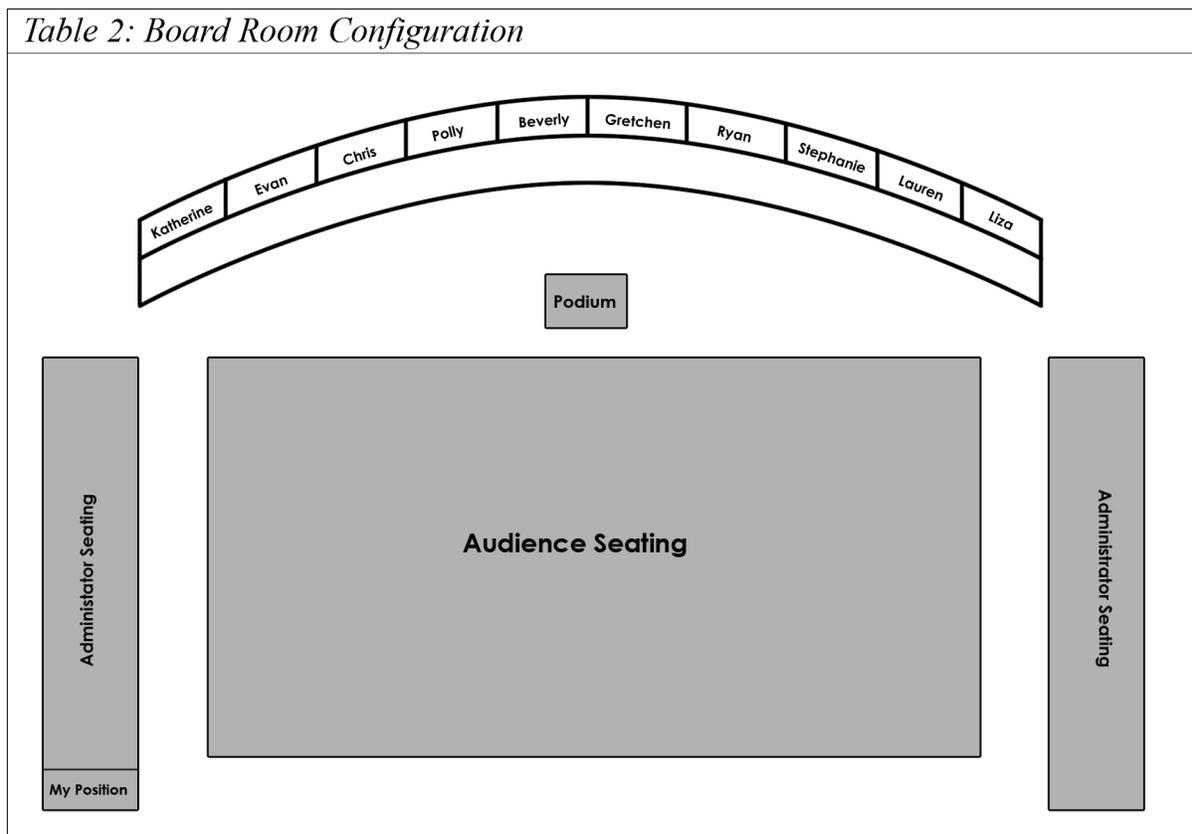
The meetings are broadcast live on T's local cable television channel. They are also recorded and reruns air for several weeks on this same channel as well as on the SD channel. The recordings are also converted into computer files to allow for online viewing via the SD website. The meetings occur the third Tuesday of every month except for July (no meeting) at the T building located within the SD.

All data for this study was collected through unobtrusive observation of three meetings totaling 9 hours, 17 minutes and 27 seconds. Meeting 1 ("M1") took place on January 24, 2012 and totaled 2 hours, 22 minutes and 57 seconds. Meeting 2 ("M2") took place on February 28, 2012 and totaled 2 hours, 55 minutes and 14 seconds. Meeting 3 ("M3") took place on March 27, 2012 and totaled 3 hours, 59 minutes and 16 seconds. For comparison, Tracy's (2007) study examined seven hours' worth of data from three observed school board meetings

As an administrative employee, I am required to attend the meetings along with several colleagues, including the aforementioned superintendent, assistant superintendent and business administrator, the director of human resources, the director of operations, and school principals. This requirement did influence my decision to observe this group. However, as outlined above, school board meetings have been the source of more than two decades of fruitful research. I was aware of this research prior to beginning this study, and my findings were of greater influence to move forward with the study than convenience. The nine board members are responsible for approving a range of monetary and operational matters that are prepared and presented by SD administrators. They must consider a multitude of perspectives when making a decision, one of which is the political and educational ideologies for which they were elected.

Setting

The nine board members and superintendent sit on curved dais. Each member has a dedicated microphone that s/he can turn on and off. From left to right, the sitting order is: Katherine, Evan, Chris, Polly, Beverly, Gretchen, Ryan, Stephanie, Lauren, and Liza. About 10 feet in front of the dais is a podium with a microphone that audience members, presenters, or other speakers use to address the board. Audience seating begins approximately five feet behind the podium and across from the dais and extends approximately 30 feet to the opposing wall. On either side of the audience seating are two long tables where the SD administrators sit during the meeting. I sit at the last seat at the table to the left of audience, farthest from the dais.



Significance of the Group

SD supports schools ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* as among the best in the country (U.S. News.com) and was ranked fourth in Pennsylvania on the 2011 statewide system of school assessment exams (“2010-2011 PSSA and AYP Results”). It is the only SD in the

558,000-resident county to exceed the national Adequate Yearly Progress measurement every year since its implementation. SD is comprised of three elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. SD is unique in that all its schools are located in T. T was named one of the 25 highest “top-earning towns” in the country with a median income of more than \$90,000 – \$40,000 more than the median in Pennsylvania. The median value of homes in T is \$520,000 more than median value of homes in Pennsylvania. As of July 2007, population of T was just above 31,000.

When justifying the significance of their examined school board, Asen, Gurke, Solomon, Conners and Gumm (2011) held that their district saw itself as a top-performer in the state, and that the board was primarily concerned with maintaining the district's high standards of achievement. As illustrated above, the present school board is likewise high performing. The increased community oversight fostered by the district's location in one township also makes the school board worthy of examination. The affluent status of T and the community's high expectations of SD increase the pressure on how the nine board members perform during the observed meetings. The potential for public scrutiny is further bolstered since the proceedings are recorded, suggesting that the nine board members would be especially conscious of disparaging interpersonal behaviors. Tracy (2007) supported the unique considerations school board members must contemplate due to their place in the community when she wrote, “School board...members represent neighbors as well as strangers” (p. 432). Thus, should a dominant act be required, a greater likelihood exists that politeness tactics would be used to mitigate both the threat to the speaker's face and to the hearer's face. The lofty expectations of SD and T, and the board members' responsibility to help uphold these expectations, make the meetings ideal for observation on the possible interaction of politeness and dominance.

Addressing Observational Concerns

My observational setting is unique in that the school board members, and the participant administrators, are aware I am observing them and have granted their permission to be a part of this study. Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis & Piele (2010) wrote this knowledge could prompt people to behave differently. Also, while I have no reason to suspect that the participants deduced the exact nature of my study, the possibility of reactivity through demand characteristics also exists. An argument could thus be made that the authenticity of my findings could be tainted.

However, it is important to remember that the participants are *always* observed in this setting, regardless of my presence or this study. Their behaviors are broadcast live on television, witnessed by audience members, and recorded via video, audio, and the written word. Therefore, knowledge of this study does not nearly influence participants' behavior as it might were they not regularly observed. In fact, being regularly observed may actually *increase* the validity of my findings. By possessing this knowledge, participants may have a stronger desire to remain true to the values that led to their election. A tighter grip on these values may lead to greater motivations to defend them. At the same time, the public setting and viewership may induce participants to soften their assertiveness – a characteristic of dominance – due to the expectation of mature, considerate and composed discourse. Recall the quote that inspired this study: “Tempered dominance is the key to charismatic leadership, interpersonal attraction, and successful interpersonal influence” (Burgoon, Johnson & Koch, 1998, p. 333). Achieving these appealing attributes in this public setting, while advocating for one's values, would benefit from the strategic use of politeness.

To negate the possibility of my prior knowledge of participants' personalities and relational history affecting my evaluation of polite and dominant discourse, I will offer no

subjective analyses of conversational dynamics. Brown and Levinson (1987) held that social interaction is particularly remarkable for its emergent properties that transcend the characteristics of those who jointly produce it. To ensure I also transcend my familiarity with participants, I will code dominance and politeness markers exclusively in accord with the research on the devices found in the literature. My analysis regarding displayed dominance and politeness tactics will be based solely on the tabulated accumulation and documented cross-pollination of these devices. I will offer no impressions about whether a behavior “seemed” dominant and/or polite.

It is important to note that knowledge of the subjects discussed in the observed meetings is beneficial because it grants insight into the specialized language, or argot. Thus, I have “clues to what is important to members and how they see their world” (Neuman, 2006, p. 398). Dunbar and Burgoon (2005) also noted that third-party observers bring a level of detachment to their observations that participants are not capable of, because participants are more involved in the interaction and thus are more cognitively busy. While I attended the select meetings as an administrator, I did not interact with the 12 participants or any other attendee during the business portion of the meeting (when emerging polite and dominant behaviors were analyzed). In this sense, I was an unobtrusive observer, a role used when researchers want to study communication in a natural setting yet choose not to become participants in the group or organization (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis & Piele, 2010). My sole contribution to the meetings occurred during the concluding public comment session after the business portion had ended. At this time, I read comments verbatim that were submitted via email by community members not in attendance who wished to weigh in on the evening’s agenda. I provided no additional commentary and board members are prohibited from responding per school board policy.

To further ensure my presence was not a distraction to participants, encourage the natural occurrence of interactions, and prevent any perception of increased observation, I refrained from taking notes or performing any outward behavior unusual to my normal actions during the select meetings. Instead, I recorded all proceedings on a personal audio recorder, placed out of view of participants. In addition to using this device to transcribe data after the meetings, I referred to the broadcast recordings of the meetings available on-demand on SD's website.

To identify politeness and dominance in the observed interactions, I will record the number of expressions of procedural meaning (EPMs) and dominant behaviors as outlined in the literature review. Again, these are: hedges, modal auxiliaries, hesitators, and point-of-view distancers/responsibility shifters (politeness) and floor control and turn length, interruptions, repetition, one-up moves, and use of the word "but."

Findings

Emergent Network: *Kindergarten*

Emergent Network: *Kindergarten* concerned the discussion of the possible implementation of a full-day kindergarten (FDK) program in SD. All nine board members and Mary participated in *Kindergarten*. The EN began immediately after Mary finished a one-sided presentation updating the board on research SD administration had performed on FDK, including the results of a community survey conducted to investigate taxpayer interest in the program.

Kindergarten spans lines 900-1287 in M3 transcript and begins with Samantha questioning the description of Mary's presentation as an "update."

900 Mary: It's just an update.

901 Samantha: Well let me, let me jump in here. Um, it, it, I think it's actually more than an
902 update.

From the very first EN examined, the hypothesis that politeness can gain dominance begins to take shape. Samantha employs three consecutive hedges to take the floor (*Well, let me*

and *let me*), then softens the threat to Mary's positive face with the hesitator *um* and two more hedges (*I think* and *actually*) before performing a one-up, non-supportive move (N↑) by rejecting Mary's assertion that her presentation was "just an update." Later in Samantha's 494-word turn – the second longest in *Kindergarten* – she employs repetition to make a one-up suggestion (S↑) that reframes *Kindergarten* from an "update" on full-day kindergarten to a "debate."

902 Samantha: And my intention on bringing this discussion forward to the board was to
903 (S↑) get direction to either press ahead with this or kill it.

928 Samantha: So, in my view, it is time to
929 (S↑) say, if we're gonna go forward with it we're gonna go forward with it with the
930 idea that we're gonna do something and we're gonna do something in, you
931 know, the next couple years while we're still a board together here or we're
932 gonna just kill it for now....

940 Samantha: ...so in my, my, in my view, it
941 (S↑) would be a perfect time to just put it to a vote, um, that we either continue to
942 pursue it or we kill it.

Peppered throughout these recognized dominance maneuvers are the EPs previously reviewed. The hedge *in my view* precedes the repeated suggestions for action and *you know* can be viewed as a solidarity marker, establishing the group as together only for a couple more years. Point-of-view distancers *we're* and *we* also seek group inclusion as well as spread responsibility for the decision to all board members.

Samantha's lengthy turn is greeted by acceptance by some board members (utterances of "yes" or "yeah"). Lauren, however, responds with "Okay" in a rising intonation that indicates she is about to pose a question. Before she can continue, Beverly interrupts her.

944 Lauren: Okay -
944 (N↑) Beverly: Samantha, um, I'm not on that boat. I don't think it's DOA.

Beverly's interruption controls the floor, indicating a successful dominant maneuver. Once in control, she counters Samantha's one-up move with one of her own (N↑), but does so

using the hedge *I don't think*, which tempers her position and reduces threat to Samantha's positive face.

Speakers interrupting or taking the floor using EPMs is a prevalent act in this EN as well as the others examined. Examples in *Kindergarten* include:

978 Polly: Could I make, could I make a suggestion?

Repeated modal auxiliaries could are used to talk over speaker Beverly and take control of floor.

1034 Ryan: Um, um, you know, I believe in the value of full-day kindergarten...

Hesitator um is repeated, follow by consecutive hedges you know and I believe to take the floor.

1164 Samantha: Can I -?

Unsuccessful interruption of Beverly using modal auxiliary can and deference

1166 Katherine: And let me ask one question.

Hedge let me used to take floor.

Clearly, EPMs have the ability to aid speakers in taking and controlling the floor during initial utterances. The question then becomes how, and if, they continue to help maintain dominance during the entire speech turn. Investigating this possibility requires looking at *Kindergarten* as a whole.

Table 4 below charts speakers in *Kindergarten* from most active to least active during the emergent network. Recalling that floor control and turn length are indicators of dominance, the objective was to total the number of utterances per speaker in the entire EN and compare this value to the total number of EPMs per speaker as outlined in the previous section. The total utterances per EN and percentage of EPMs in the EN were also calculated. This practice will be repeated in the analysis of subsequent ENs.

The findings report that the longer a speaker holds the floor and the greater his/her cumulative turn length, the greater the use of EPMs. Organizing the table by most to least active speakers in *Kindergarten* produces essentially the same results had the table been organized by most to least users of EPMs. Ryan consumed nearly 21% of the discussion space while using 30

more EPMs than the next closet speaker Katherine. His 11.1% of EPMs per utterances is second to Chris, who is the only *Kindergarten* speaker in the bottom half of participants to exceed the average 9.5% of EPMs per EN utterances. All of the top-five floor-holders have EPMs per utterances percentages over the average and hover around 10% with the exception of Ryan. Strikingly, after Beverly, participants' EPMs plummet by more than half and continue to decline.

Speaker	UPS	% UPS/Total EN Utterances	Total EPMs	% EPMs/Utterances
Ryan	1123	20.9%	125	11.1%
Katherine	980	18.3%	95	9.7%
Samantha	868	16.2%	84	9.6%
Polly	696	13%	74	10.5%
Beverly	513	9.5%	51	9.9%
Lauren	492	9.1%	25	5%
Chris	238	4.4%	27	11.3%
Liza	193	3.6%	18	9.3%
Evan	128	2.3%	7	5.4%
Mary	121	2.2%	7	5.7%
TOTAL	5,349	N/A	512	9.5%

As for Chris, his high EPMs per utterances percentage does appear contradictory to the findings. However, it is imperative to note that his 238 utterances are nearly 900 less than Ryan's and his 27 EPMs nearly 100 less. To compare apples to apples, I must divide Chris' UPS by Ryan's, then multiple by Chris' EPMs value. This will prognosticate how many EPMs Chris would have used to reach Ryan's turn length – and his corresponding dominance – had he

continued using them at the rate he did in this EN. Hence: $1123/238 = 4.7 \times 27 = 127$. This figure is just two more than Ryan's total EPMs, which suggests that becoming the most dominant speaker in a group benefits from early and regular politeness usage employed consistently through numerous turns.

Another factor that may have influenced Chris' excessive use of EPMs is the content of his speech act. In his only turn of the EN, Chris is only speaker to address a suggestion made by the district's director of student services earlier in the meeting that full-day kindergarten could particularly benefit "special needs students," or those children with learning deficiencies. This sensitive issue requires political correctness and careful selection of words when it is addressed, especially in a public forum. Chris acknowledges this difficult position during his turn when, talking about how to reach these students, he expresses reluctance when using the verbiage necessary to articulate his thoughts (underlined). He also uses several point-of-view distancers (italicized) and hesitators (bolded) to separate his statement from his sole perspective.

1098 ...*we* would begin to
 1099 look at *our-*, *we're* going to, **um**, I don't, **I**, I hate to use the word "identify," how *we're*
 1100 going to seek out the st-, the students that, that need that extra, **ah**, that need that
 1101 extra help.

Chris' statement is also full of disturbances in speech pattern, or dysfluencies, which indicate a lack of verbal control (Burgoon & Dunbar, 2005). Chris' stammering further supports the notion that he felt he was dealing with difficult subject matter, thus his choice to employ excessive EPMs to reduce possible offense.

Before moving to the second EN, another sequence at the end of *Kindergarten* is worthy of analysis.

1283 (S↑) Samantha: I think we need to close the book on this at the
 1284 administrative level and move on.
 1285 (N↑) Beverly: I'd say maybe just put it on the shelf, not close the book.

Samantha makes a one-up, dominant move in accordance with her earlier suggestion about “killing” FDK, complete with a hedge (*I think*) and point-of-view distancer (*we*). Beverly counters with a one-up, nonsupportive dominant move, but shrouds it in three consecutive politeness markers, all hedges to reduce threat to both her and Samantha’s positive face (*I’d say, maybe and just*).

Emergent Network: *The Resolution*

EN: *The Resolution* occurred during M2 and concerned a debate about the wording of a resolution the board intended to send to Harrisburg in support of funding for public schools. Polly was absent from this meeting, but the remaining eight board members participated in this EN. *The Resolution* took place during the consent agenda portion of the meeting, when board members can approve a list of items on the agenda without engaging in discussion if all agree. Should a board member wish to discuss an item on the consent agenda, s/he requests to “pull it out” and thus begins a dialogue. Lauren pulled the resolution from the consent agenda with the intention of reading it and providing no further commentary. But per SD policy, Beverly invited board members to weigh in on the matter. *The Resolution* spans lines 327-675 in M2 transcript and begins with Samantha voicing concerns about a phrase in the draft of the resolution. The EPMs are marked as such: hedges-bold; hesitators-italics.

327 Samantha: Yeah, *um*, **you know** when I read this initially I **certainly** understand the, *ah*, the
 328 heart and the concern that goes into this and **I think** it’s well placed and **I think** it’s
 329 (N↑) important. I, *ah*, I do have a problem though with the second to last paragraph.

In her first sentence upon taking the floor, Samantha uses 6 EPMs as well as softens her impending one-up move of nonsupport (challenge) with the statement, “I understand the, *ah*, heart and concern that goes into this...”. She also uses the hesitator *ah* before articulating her one-up move with no further EPMs. In total, throughout her 263-utterance turn, Samantha uses 37 EPMs, or 14% of her utterances – the highest percentage of EPMs per lengthy turns of all

speakers in *The Resolution*. Considering Samantha's turn was the first in this EN and involved several dominant challenges to the resolution's wording, it is significant to underscore the number of politeness markers used.

Samantha's one-up move was made more dominant by Chris' one-down response.

351 Beverly: Thank you, Samantha. Does anybody else have a comment? Would you like to –
 352 (A↓) Chris: I would just, do you offer some kind of solution to...?
 353 (S↑) Samantha: Rewrite it, reword it, or drop that last, ah, drop that last line.

Immediately following Samantha's turn, however, Lauren counters her one-up moves with one of her own, using repetitions throughout her first 160-word turn and her 70-word turn immediately following to attempt to gain dominance. Politeness again comes into play.

Repetition 1

355 Lauren: I, I'm where this resolution reads as it reads because that's an integral part of the
 356 (↑N) resolution...

359 (↑N) Lauren: ...it's actually critical that that be in the resolution that...

362 (↑N) Lauren: ...that really has to be in there, Samantha.

Repetition 2

362 Lauren: You know, I

363: (↑N) don't see how that hurts SD to ask for public education before it ends in the
 364: state.

371 Lauren: I think

372 (↑N) it can only hurt SD if school districts in our own county are bankrupt.

After Lauren's first one-up move of nonsupport in Repetition 1, she uses two quantity hedges – *really* and *actually* – to aid in repeating this nonsupport. In Repetition 2, she uses three hedges – *you know*, *I don't see* and *I think* – before completing her challenges. Once again, to illustrate the influence of politeness on dominance in *The Resolution*, the below table is supplied.

Lauren, Evan, Chris and Samantha rank highest in utterances in *The Resolution*.

Accordingly, they also rank highest in total EPMS and EPMS per utterances percentage, all scoring above the EN average of 9.6%. Like in *Kindergarten*, total EPMS drop as a speaker's utterances drop, and after Samantha, EPMS fall by nearly double. Also like *Kindergarten*, one

board member, Liza, is an outlier with 11.4% of EPMS per utterance with just 210 utterances.

Employing the same calculation as with Chris earlier ($808/210 = 3.8 \times 21 = 79.8$) once again

indicates the significance of regular and sustained usage of politeness to maintain dominance.

Table 5: Total Utterances Per Speaker (UPS) vs. Expressions of Procedural Meaning (EPMS) in Emergent Network The Resolution

Speaker	UPS	% UPS/Total EN Utterances	Total EPMS	% EPMS/Utterances
Lauren	808	20%	79	9.7%
Evan	606	15%	70	11.5%
Chris	595	14.7%	59	9.9%
Samantha	587	14.5%	63	10.7%
Ryan	499	12.3%	37	7.4%
Beverly	471	11.6%	35	7.4%
Katherine	248	6.1%	24	9.6%
Liza	210	5.2%	21	11.4%
Gretchen	13	0.3%	3	N/A
TOTAL	4,037	N/A	391	9.6%

Also as in *Kindergarten*, *The Resolution* features speakers taking the floor or successfully interrupting by using politeness:

452 Gretchen: So let me just restate the two changes.
Successfully interrupts Evan with hedges let me and just

457 Katherine: Oh, I'm sorry, sorry Gretchen.
Successfully interrupts Gretchen with hesitator oh and two apologies

458 Liza: Can I just add something?
Successfully takes the floor with modal auxiliary can and hedge just

541 Chris: Can I, can I just add in just a second...
Successfully interrupts and takes the floor with modal auxiliaries can and hedges just

550 Liza: Can we say, can't we say equitable?

Successfully interrupts with modal auxiliary can and softens challenge with point-of-distancer we

605 Chris: Let me withdraw, let me withdraw that FAPE reference.

Talks over with hedges let me

609 Samantha: I think that's really bad.

Successfully interrupts, employs one-up non support (↑N) using hedges I think and really

Finally, touching again on turn length per number of EPMs. In *The Resolution*, the five lengthiest turns were lines 327-350 (Samantha, 263 utterances); 355-365 (Lauren, 160); 430-445 (Evan, 245); 522-530 (Ryan, 149); and 616-625 (Evan, 145). Significantly, four of these five turns also contained the highest number of EPMs per turn at **37**, **10**, **19**, **15** and **23**, respectively.

Emergent Network: *Budget Meeting*

The last lengthy emergent network to be examined is *Budget Meeting*. This EN constituted the most heated debate that took place during the three observed meetings. It concerned a discussion among all nine board members and two administrators (Mary and Tony) about rescheduling a planned special board meeting on the 2012-13 SD budget from a Thursday night to a Saturday morning due to Polly's unavailability on the original date. Encompassing lines 1419-1772, *Budget Meeting* contains the highest number of talk overs, interruptions and floor control maneuvers than any examined EN as well as any sequence of the same length in all observed meetings. Just as significantly, *Budget Meeting* consists of the most turns 99 utterances or less, differentiating it from the other examined ENs and allowing for a unique review of possible politeness and dominance interaction.

Budget Meeting begins with Chris taking the floor using politeness. He initiates the subsequent debate by asserting his position that the special meeting on the budget be rescheduled due to Polly's absence. This topic change differentiates the EN from its preceding turns.

1419 Chris: Can I quickly interject something? (↑SR) I think it would be critical that we have

1420 nine board members, especially Polly because she is someone that I lean upon for,
1421 um, guidance on budgetary type things, and also Samantha.

Again, the floor is controlled with a modal auxiliary (*can*) followed by the hedge *quickly*.

Chris then begins his one-up suggestion/reasoning move with another hedge *I think*. Samantha validates his dominance attempt with a one-down, accepting response in the next turn, line 1428 (“Agreed”). Chris’ total turn lasts 8 lines and 111 utterances, the second longest in *Budget Meeting*. Accordingly, it also contains the second-highest number of EPMS per turn with 11, or 10%. Polly’s turn at lines 1511-1522 is the longest at 143 utterances and 14 EPMS, again 10%.

It is tempting to suggest that the longer the turn, the more EPMS simply because there is more opportunity to use them, and shorter turns don’t have room to fit EPMS in along with actual “substantive” content. The data proves otherwise. Lines 1436-1439 spoken by Chris with 54 utterances and 4 EPMS; lines 1469-1471 spoken by Gretchen (38 utterances/2 EPMS); lines 1494-1499 spoken by Polly (78/4); lines 1494-1499 spoken by Liza (71/6); and lines 1766-1769 spoken Beverly (56/2) help refute this notion.

Extrapolating these turns to match Polly’s, Chris would need 89 more utterances and 10 more EPMS, or an EPM for every 8.9 utterances (11% of his remaining turn); Gretchen would need 105 more utterances and 12 more EPMS, or an EPM for every 8.75 utterances (11.4%); Polly would need 65 more utterances and 10 more EPMS, or an EPM every 6.5 utterances (15.3%); Liza would need 72 more utterances and 8 more EPMS, or an EPM every 9 utterances (11.1%); and Beverly would need 87 more utterances and 12 more EPMS, or an EPM every 7.25 utterances (13.7%).

To understand the implications of these figures, recall that the three speakers with the highest number of utterances in each EN also had the highest number of EPMS. The average percentage of EPMS per utterances of these top three speakers was 10.3% (*Resolution*), 10.1%

(*Kindergarten*) and 9.8% (*Budget Meeting*). These findings suggest that the most dominant speakers dedicate approximately 10% of their utterances to EPMs. Thus, each of the lesser active board members specified above would need to reduce their usage of EPMs per utterances to conform to the EPMs per utterances ratio preferred by the most dominant speakers. In other words, they would have to speak more *without* using EPMs.

Conversely, imagine a speaker must use an unusually high number of EPMs per utterances to reach this 10% “sweet spot.” Such a scenario requires over-saturating turns with politeness indicators, rendering them void of any useful information. For example, statements like “I think we just could um maybe...” or “To be honest, really, I mean ah would...” could technically be uttered during a turn, but would be meaningless to listeners. No speaker in their right mind would chose this method of communication throughout a turn. Thus, a lower number of EPMs in shorter turns is not indicative of restraint due to utterance length but due to speaker preference. Spreading EPMs throughout the turn, then, is a most logical route to floor control.

Later in *Budget Meeting*, Polly, Lauren and Beverly engage in a dominance/politeness exchange worthy of examination. Lauren begins with repeating a statement she first put forth in lines 1540-1541 (bolded), which is indicative of a dominance maneuver.

1596 Lauren: **I believe a number of the administrators aren't speaking up.** They keep
 1597 saying they can't make it [but they're not saying anything –]¹
 1598 Polly: [But, Lauren, I mean] to be honest, and no
 1598 offense guys, I, I'm not sure we need a
 1599 bunch of the administrators there. We need this guy there [[[Chuckle]², gesturing to
 1600 Beverly: [Right.]
 1601 Polly (Tony)). We need Gretchen there. I, you know, we don't typically in those sessions
 1602 get to a place where we're asking these [guys to] on the fly to modify their
 1603 Beverly: [Right.]
 1604 Polly: budget.
 1605 Beverly: We don't.
 1606 Polly: It, it just, it [doesn't] go there. [So quite frankly as far as I'm concerned] I'm not
 1607 Beverly: [No.]

¹ Brackets indicate talk over

² Double parenthesis indicate transcriber's comments

- 1608 Beverly: [Or questions that are directed to them.]
 1609 Polly: sure we –, love you all, you know I love ya, not sure we really need you sitting
 1610 [there. I, you know...]
 1611 Beverly: [Are you feeling as if] you're gonna miss it? ((Directed to administrators)) That
 1611 as if [you need to be...] Are you, what's you, what's your thought?
 1612: Polly: [I mean that's just my...]
 1613: Polly: I mean, it's...your call.

This sequence showcases many examples of the interplay between politeness and dominance. After Lauren's initial one-up suggestion led by the hedge *I believe*, Polly successfully talks over and interrupts her with a dominant *but* before softening the one-up, nonsupportive move with consecutive hedges *I mean*, *to be honest*, and *I'm not sure* as well as point-of-view distancer *we*. She resumes her hedging of the one-up move in line 1601 with *you know* and *typically*, as well as including more point-of-view distancers. The effectiveness of her one-up moves is validated by Beverly, who interjects with one-down acceptors in lines 1600, 1603, 1605 and 1607.

Even more interesting is Polly's rapid use of EPMS after her initial dominant turn. Lines 1606 and 1609 see eight hedges in 38 utterances, or 21%: *just*, *quite frankly*, *as far as I'm concerned*, *I'm not sure*, *you know*, *not sure*, *really*, and *you know*. After Beverly asks the administrators about their desire to attend the meeting, Polly uses hedges to retract her one-up move and claim it is the administrators' decision: *I mean* and *just* (line 1612), and *I mean* (line 1613). It is possible Polly recognized her dominance required even more politeness to maintain its effectiveness than the significant amount she already employed gaining it.

Additionally, like Chris in *Kindergarten*, Polly may have employed an excessive number of EPMS due to the difficult content of her statement. To make her point, she must threaten the positive face of the administrators in attendance by dismissing their role at the budget meeting in question, thus insinuating they are not integral to conducting this meeting. She recognizes this

face threat by prefacing it with “no offense guys” (line 1598). Like Chris, her anxiety in making this statement is revealed through a surplus of politeness indicators.

Lastly, just as in the other examined ENs, the table below lists each participant’s EPM usage per utterances and total EN utterances. Again, aside from Lauren, the top-five floor-holders also had the highest use of EPMS. The top-two floor-holders, Beverly and Polly, exceeded the EN average by almost one and a full two percentage points, respectively.

Table 5: Total Utterances Per Speaker (UPS) vs. Linguistic Politeness Indicators (EPMS) in Emergent Network Budget Meeting

Speaker	UPS	% UPS/Total EN Utterances	Total EPMS	% EPMS/Utterances
Beverly	589	22.1%	57	9.6%
Polly	576	21.6%	62	10.7%
Gretchen	377	14.1%	34	9%
Chris	278	10.4%	22	7.9%
Katherine	202	7.5%	16	7.9%
Ryan	153	5.7%	11	7.1%
Tony	141	5.3%	7	4.9%
Lauren	125	4.7%	10	8%
Liza	103	3.8%	8	7.7%
Samantha	73	2.7%	5	6.8%
TOTAL	2,658	N/A	232	8.7%

Also significant to note is Tony’s 4.9% EPMS/utterances. With just seven EPMS during the entirety of his 141 utterances, he boasts the lowest percentage of the ENs examined compared to total utterances. This further suggests politeness’ use toward dominance, as well as

politeness' relationship with power. In *Budget Meeting*, Tony is the least powerful member of the group. As business administrator, he ranks below all the school board members and Gretchen in terms of position prestige. He is also tasked with creating a board-approved budget based on the board members' input. Thus, as the least powerful person in the EN, he accordingly enacted the least amount of dominance maneuvers, despite his 5.3% possession of the floor during *Budget Meeting*. Correspondingly, he also expressed the least number of EPMs per utterances, further supporting the relationship between politeness and dominance.

Discussion

During the more than eight hours of discussion from which data was examined, the interaction of politeness and dominance was a frequent and observable phenomenon. The ENs examined were just a few of many. They were selected due to the range of interpersonal dominance and politeness behaviors contained therein as well as the range of the behaviors among them as a whole. The objective documentation of EPMs, the consideration of how the content of some speakers' turns may influence their excessive use of politeness, and the quantifying of participant and EN utterances allowed for the most impartial findings. This objective analysis gives greater weight to the final statistics confirming the influence of politeness toward dominance.

The interpersonal interactions observed during the three business meetings indicate that dominant speakers employ more frequent EPMs than less dominant speakers, and that this behavior aids in gaining and maintaining control of the conversation and smoothing the expression of assertive positions during speech acts. The speakers who held the floor the longest during each EN consistently used the greatest number of EPMs. In cases where EPMs were used in excess during a speech act, there were indications that these linguistic choices were made due

to the speech act's particularly difficult content, whether as a result of a significant face threat to addressees or due to a politically charged topic. In these cases, EPMs softened conversational impact by distancing the speaker from the galvanizing content therein and/or by reducing the bite of the potentially offensive commentary.

The results of the present study also indicate politeness indicators are used to gain dominance through interruptions, in that they reduce the imposition made to the interrupted speaker and the aggressiveness possibly perceived by the act. Frequent tactics used to interrupt were asking permission to take the floor and using hedges such as *just* to explain the rationale behind the maneuver. Brown and Levinson (1987) claimed that an interruption intrinsically threatens both negative and positive face, however the authors did not explicitly state whether negative and positive politeness could occur simultaneously when an interruption is performed.

Yabuuchi (2006) touched on this concept of concurrent politeness when he held that everyone has a desire to simultaneously satisfy as much as possible both the want for freedom from imposition and the want for involvement. It could be argued that an interrupter meets the first need by overtaking the conversation, thus freeing him/herself from the control exerted by the original speaker, and meets the latter need by joining the conversation.

Most poignantly, the findings in this study regarding interruptions inform politeness theory in that they suggest positive and negative politeness *can* occur in the same polite act, an example being line 978 in *Kindergarten*. Polly interrupts Beverly by saying, "Could I make, could I make a suggestion," which defers to the interrupted with modal auxiliaries, thus attending to Beverly's desire to be free of imposition (negative face), while implying that Beverly is valued because Polly seeks her permission before moving forward (positive face).

The value of conceptualizing the school board as a community of practice was confirmed when reviewing the study's results. Furthermore, the term may now require a fresh outlook. One criterion of a CofP is the necessity for members to gather together to actively pursue their goals, and that the members, as a group, jointly negotiate these goals (Vaughn, 2007). The interplay of politeness and dominance during the ENs examined suggests conversational negotiation occurs as the speakers voice their thoughts. Dominant maneuvers are aided by politeness to maintain civility and respect the nature of the CofP. By tempering dominance with politeness, the school board members engaged in a sort of diplomatic dance, asserting opinions that undercut another's while adhering to the attributes of "mutual engagement," "joint enterprise" and "shared repertoire" (Wenger, 1998, p. 73) that define a CofP.

Since politeness, interpersonal dominance and communities of practice are relational and require at least dyadic interactions to exist, and dominance and politeness have now been found to facilitate the dynamics of formal group meetings, it stands to reason that the two interpersonal behaviors play a major role in *all* communities of practice, as there will always be members vying for control while employing politeness to maintain the collaboration constituting a CofP. Davies (2005) wrote: "There is little doubt that the communities of practice framework has created new insights into the ways in which language...index[es] social identity" (p. 577). The present findings flip this notion, suggesting that there is little doubt language (in this case, the negotiation of dominance and politeness) can create new insights into the ways in which one defines his/her social identity in a community of practice.

The present findings can also be viewed from the perspective taken by Xie, He and Lin (2005) that "we may cooperate in order to be non-cooperative or uncooperative" (p. 436). In their review of politeness, the authors examined Grice's (1989) Cooperative Principle (CP),

which requires that utterances by participants should be directed toward a goal, and this kind of cooperation helps the whole interaction move forward smoothly and constructively. Xie, et al. (2005) questioned politeness as being an inherently cooperative act, instead suggesting CP can be manipulated and that sometimes people are polite in order to deceive. While there is no indication that the school board members sought to deceive through their use of politeness, it is feasible that their use of EPMS to take control of the conversation was a type of uncooperative act. In some instances, their actions – specifically interruptions and one-up moves – disrupted the flow of the discussion and, when considered from the hearer’s perspective, could be viewed as obstinate. However, it is also possible that since “politeness may be viewed as a practice enacted within a specific community practice” (Xie, et al., 2005, p. 442), a polite/dominant speech act that might appear uncooperative in another setting would not in the CofP of a school board. Future research that involves specifically questioning the hearer about how s/he interpreted the politeness/dominance of the speech act, specifically whether it seemed non-cooperative or simply in line with the dynamics of the CofP, would be beneficial.

Of course, this project’s most valuable contribution to theory on politeness and dominance is the bank of research it supplies to the formerly neglected areas of study. Prior to this paper, little to no research on the possible interaction of politeness and dominance existed. A relationship has now been outlined and distinguished between the two interpersonal behaviors, and politeness indicators have now been proven to gain and maintain dominance. With this information as support, a sturdy launch pad is now in place for more research on the subject.

Furthermore, while this study concentrated on a unique and specific organizational group, the results can be extrapolated to understand the communication dynamics of other decision-making groups more generally (Castor, 2007). Taking this a step further, the observed interaction

between politeness and dominance can extend to other instances of interpersonal communication, such as that among interdepartmental teams, interorganizational collaboration groups, or other venues where competing viewpoints may be expressed (Castor).

Finally, future research should consider how and if nonverbal dominance indicators such as eye contact, hand gestures, initiation of touch, and less smiling (Burgoon, Johnson & Koch, 1998) are influenced by expressed politeness. Also, the inclusion of more culturally and demographically diverse participants would allow the findings to be expanded for wider application.

Conclusion

This paper provided literature reviews of politeness and dominance, touched on research regarding these interpersonal behaviors in business meetings, and delved into the concept of communities of practice. This research allowed for observation and examination of three formal business meetings of a board of school directors for indicators of interaction between politeness and dominance. Through a detailed discourse analysis and linguistic coding based upon proven politeness and dominance tactics, this study found that politeness can indeed gain and maintain dominance in interpersonal interactions. Politeness indicators such as hedges, modal auxiliaries, point-of-view distancers, and hesitators were shown to help take and hold the floor, aid in successful interruptions, soften one-up moves and “but” assertions, and support repetitive, dominance-seeking statements. While at first glance politeness and dominance appear opposed, after closer inspection it is clear that not only do they interact, in many cases the former is an optimal way to initiate and perpetuate the latter.

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