

Your job in this paper is to analyze the 30-minute videotape (see accompanying transcript on CUlearn) that is available through web links on CUlearn, or by directly going to the url: <http://comm.colorado.edu/fvec/play.php?id=77>. In this discussion, three students (our TAC folks) talk about tattoos, body piercing, and plastic surgery. To stimulate their discussion, they were given the following questions:

*Body tattooing and piercing.* Do you favor body tattooing and/or piercing? For yourself? For others? If so, why? If not, why not? Does your position depend on particular selections? If so, about what options do you feel positively? Negatively? What kind of identity messages are given by different choices? What kind of identity is conveyed by absence of tattoos and/or pierces? What difference, if any, does gender make in terms the acceptability of body tattooing and pierces. What about age? (20-40-60?)

*Cosmetic surgery.* Cosmetic surgery has become increasingly common. In addition to reconstructive work following an accident or if a person is born with a defect, increasing numbers of people are now opting to improve their appearance by “going under the knife.” Although the majority of people currently electing cosmetic surgery are women, the number of men is on the rise. What is the cultural significance of cosmetic surgery? Is it good or bad for society that it is becoming more commonplace? Is and should cosmetic surgery be an OK option for everyone? Would you consider cosmetic surgery yourself? If your opinion is different for yourself than for other people, why is that? What difference does gender make in terms of cosmetic surgery’s acceptability?

### **Your Analytic Task**

Describe what you see as the 2-3 *most interesting* aspects of identity that this exchange makes visible. Consider all the kinds of identity that we have discussed thus far in the class both in a focused way through the Benwell and Stokoe text and in the other readings. For the selected identities, analyze what Harold, Kumar, and Ann’s talk reflected and constructed, giving particular attention to explaining the discourse practices that did this identity-work.

The paper is to be 7-9 pages. Cite references from class as relevant but there’s no need to do other reading. Focus your time on building a compelling analysis. Bring in transcript excerpts as relevant to make your points. If a point relates to a larger practice, you can refer to stretches of line numbers in the full transcript.

### **Suggested Steps**

- Watch the video through several times, both with and without the transcript.
- Consider what inferences you are drawing about each person and their relationships. Work to attend to subtle identity/relationship features. What discourse features are contributing?
- Work from the other direction: Identify discursive moves—narratives, turn design, interruption, vocalic moves such as laughter, lexical choices, speech acts, facework, questioning, metacommunication, reported speech, argument moves, and so on—what identities is a kind of move making relevant?