

## **Flight Attendants Talking About Pilots: What Qualitative Discourse Analysis Can Tell Us About Intercrew Relations**

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Flight attendants and pilots comprise the inflight 'team' which is crucial for aviation safety and security, and which is continuously emphasised and taught in training. Crew Resource Management (CRM) techniques call for flight and cabin crew to work seamlessly together in emergencies and non-routine events; open, 'good' communication is a fundamental part of both CRM training and of safe, successful outcomes in emergency situations. There are, however, two significant barriers which pilots and flight attendants must overcome to achieve such a unified 'team' construct. Flight attendants have a relatively low position in the aviation hierarchical structure of the Chain of Command. This position is related to the reduced power and status which flight attendants have with respect to other commercial aviation roles, the most notable being pilots. At the same time, flight attendants and pilots are positioned by airlines, government regulatory bodies, and labour unions, as two separate employee groups. Using qualitative discourse analytic techniques, I show that flight attendants do not always adhere to the united inflight 'team' construct which is so heavily and consistently emphasised in training. Instead of referring to pilots and flight attendants in terms of 'us' and 'we' in incident report narratives written by flight attendants and submitted to the Aviation Safety Reporting System, a separation of 'us' flight attendants and 'them' pilots emerges. This separation reflects the realities of aviation, but is contrary to training and could have implications for safety.