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Face and Facework: An Introduction

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Face entails the presentation of a civilized front to another individual within the webs of interconnected relationships in a particular culture. It is a metaphor that captivates the interests of scholars in diverse disciplines. Face is a claimed sense of self-respect in an interactive situation. It has been viewed, alternatively, as a symbolic resource, as social status, as a projected identity issue, and as a fundamental communication phenomenon. Facework involves the enactment of face strategies, verbal and nonverbal moves, self-presentation acts, and impression management interaction.

Face and facework have been researched in the areas of compliance-gaining and request/persuasive strategies (Applegate, 1982; Baxter, 1984; Craig, Tracy, & Spisak, 1986; Hale, 1986; Leichty & Applegate, 1991; Lim, 1990; O'Keefe & Shepherd, 1987, 1989; Tracy, Craig, Smith, & Spisak, 1984). They have been used as explanatory mechanisms in the study of politeness discourse (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Holmes, 1988, 1989; Holtgraves, 1992; Holtgraves & Yang, 1992; Katriel, 1986, 1991; Matsumoto, 1988; Scollon & Scollon, 1981, 1983; Shimanoff, 1985, 1987, 1988) and self-presentation behavior (Cupach & Metts, 1990; Edelmann, 1987, 1990; Goffman, 1955, 1956, 1959, 1967; Imahori & Cupach, 1991; Metts & Cupach, 1989; Schlenker, 1985).

Finally, face and facework have also been studied in connection with cross-cultural conflict styles (Ting-Toomey, 1988; Ting-Toomey, Gao, Trubisky, Yang, Kim, Lin, & Nishida, 1991; Trubisky, Ting-Toomey, & Lin, 1991), courtroom dramas (Pen-

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man, 1987, 1990, 1991), diplomatic negotiation (Brown, 1977; Cohen, 1991; Pharr, 1990; Ting-Toomey & Cole, 1990), management practice (Fairhurst, Green, & Snavely, 1984; Hiemstra, 1982; Hwang, 1987; Redding & Ng, 1983), and communication competence (Kim, 1993; Lim & Bowers, 1991). Indeed, the study of face and facework remains an enigmatic and enduring area of inquiry in relationship to a host of other research concepts.

The purpose of this book is twofold: (1) to review and extend some of the current ideas in face and facework research in the areas of cross-cultural and interpersonal communication, and (2) to illuminate specific theoretical and methodological challenges that surround the study of face and facework. While a systematic body of work has been accumulated in the area of face and facework, the inquiry of face and facework is still in its infancy. Many researchers have used the concept of "face" or "facework" in their studies loosely. In many of these studies, the conceptualizations, the linkages, and the operationalizations of face or facework in conjunction with other face-related concepts remain vague and fuzzy. How face is being conceptualized and evoked is not specified in some studies, and the corresponding relationships between face and facework process often are not articulated. Further, the cultural, relational, contextual, or communication parameters of face and face behavior have not been clearly identified.

The primary intent of this book is to begin wrestling with some of the issues raised here. Authors of the various chapters have proposed new ideas, propositions, or perspectives to account for the relationship between culture and face, and between interpersonal relationships and facework. They have also mapped out many fruitful directions and constructive ideas for future research into face and facework dynamics.

This essay serves as an introduction to some of these ideas. The chapter has a dual purpose: (1) to identify some of the underlying themes that run throughout the chapters of the book, and (2) to summarize the major ideas that are presented in each chapter.

Common Themes

Five common themes emerge from the chapters that follow: (1) face entails both cultural-universal and cultural-specific dimensions, (2) face is an identity-boundary phenomenon, (3)

face carries both affective and social cognitive implications, (4) face and facework are located in the situated discourse process of interaction, and (5) face and facework operate across everyday situational contexts.

First, face has both cultural-universal and cultural-specific aspects. It appears that most authors in the book conceptualize face as a universal social phenomenon. Face involves the claimed sense of self-respect or self-dignity in an interactive situation. Facework involves the verbal and nonverbal negotiation aspects of face maintenance, face claim, and face expectation. Facework strategies can be used to diffuse, manage, enhance, or downgrade self and/or other's face. While the concept of face assumes universality concerning the claimed sense of self-respect or self-worthiness level, how one conceptualizes face and how one manages a facework episode is influenced by cultural variability (chapters 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9), gender variability (chapters 6 and 8), relational variability (chapters 7 and 10), and contextual variability (chapters 2 and 10).

Second, face is an identity-boundary issue. All authors touch upon the issues of face and identity implicitly or explicitly. While Penman (chapter 2) views face as self-identity through which communicators order their social world, Morisaki and Gudykunst (chapter 3) interpret the construal of self and face as two separate constructs. For them, it is the cultural variability in self-construals that affects our conceptualization of face, and hence, facework. For Chang and Holt (chapter 4) and Ho (chapter 9), face is a flexible, dynamic self/society metaphor in which personal, relational, and group boundaries are negotiated and redefined. While Chang and Holt emphasize the cultural-specific elements of face in Chinese culture, Ho emphasizes the basic sociometric dimensions and expectations of face claims and face congruence in reaching a balance point of a civilized, social life.

Scollon and Scollon (chapter 5), drawing from a sociocultural perspective, discuss the boundary conditions of self between Asian and Western cultures, and Shimanoff (chapter 6) reflects upon the role of identity expectation between females and males. For Scollon and Scollon, face is viewed as a sociocultural, normative identity question. For Shimanoff, face is viewed as a discourse functional question and a sociological identity question. On the facework strategy selection level, Edelmann (chapter 8) focuses on the strategy appropriateness dimension of identity-loss and identity-recovery in embarrass-

ing situations, and Lim (chapter 6) focuses on the strategy effectiveness dimension of interpersonal identity-threatening situations.

Third, face involves both affective and social cognitive components. Face-related concepts such as pride, shame, embarrassment, blushing, respect, deference, justice, and honor involve both affective reactions and social cognitive judgments. These face-related affective reactions and social cognitive attributions have been discussed by various authors (e.g., by Penman, Morisaki and Gudykunst, Chang and Holt, Edelmann, Ho, Tracy and Baratz) in different chapters of the book. Facework, in essence, is viewed as an artful process of diffusing and managing self-focused emotions and other-focused emotions. Concurrently, facework involves attributions, calculations, and co-orientations. Facework moves, in essence, entail a high degree of affective creativity, cognitive creativity, and communication competence creativity.

Fourth, facework is located in the situated discourse. Penman (chapter 2) views the use of facework discourse as a process of re-creating the meanings of one's own and other's social lives. Tracy and Baratz (chapter 10) view face concerns and facework moves as located in the discourse setting and conjointly defined by the participants *in situ*. Scollon and Scollon (chapter 5) compare and contrast discourse logic between Asian and Western cultures. Shimanoff (chapter 6) reviews facework literature in connection with politeness discourse. According to Shimanoff, however, the concept of facework includes politeness, but politeness does not necessarily include all types of facework. Almost all authors in the book subscribe to a contextualized communication orientation in the study of face and facework. Terms like face-saving, face-threatening, face-compensating, face-losing, face-giving, and face-honoring are viewed as grounded in the verbal interchange process.

Some authors place a heavier emphasis on the normative values, roles, positional identities, statuses, and/or networks that surround the facework interaction process. Other authors focus their discussion on the relationship between discourse and context, and the transformational power of facework discourse itself. In summing up the different points of view, it appears that most authors believe that individuals have different degrees of choice in evoking, enacting, upholding, and/or violating self/other face concern issues via the discourse process.

The degree of choice, however, is affected by relational, socio-cultural, and competence variations.

Finally, face and facework are two ubiquitous concepts that are tied closely to everyday social and personal interactions. Face and facework permeate intercultural encounters, small group encounters, social network encounters, and interpersonal encounters. Face is, indeed, a network field concept with implications that extend beyond immediate dyadic or group boundaries, and across long-term spatio-temporal dimensions. The concepts of face and facework appear to be elastic in meanings and resilient in endurance. Lastly, authors in this volume present specific recommendations or challenges for researchers who are interested in grappling with the fundamental issues of studying face and facework across cultural, gender, interpersonal, and discourse lines.

The Chapters

This section summarizes the key ideas in each chapter. The first four chapters provide a broad context for the book. Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 address universal, moral, cross-cultural, cultural-specific, and communication issues in the study of face and facework. The next set of chapters, chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 focus more on specific theoretical and/or methodological ideas of face and facework research. More specifically, chapters 6 and 7 establish a backdrop to the study of interpersonal facework from a gender perspective and a relational intention perspective. Chapter 8 examines the effects of gender and culture on the use of interpersonal face-saving strategies in embarrassing situations. Chapters 9 and 10 take us through two different methodological journeys in the "doing" of facework research. Finally, the last chapter, chapter 11, is a distillation of ideas and reflections concerning the directions and challenges of theorizing about and doing facework research in cross-cultural and interpersonal contexts.

In chapter 2, Robyn Penman argues that facework is an enduring primary mechanism for regulating social life. Facework is posed as a central theme in which human beings come to develop a concept of self-identity, and through which they learn to morally order their social world. For Penman, the concept of face is a fundamental social condition of being human. While face, or self-identities are those "psychological ascriptions that

we take on and negotiate in our interaction with others," face-work refers to communication action in which social knowl-edge is generated conjointly between the interactants. She argues persuasively that both the enactment of facework and the study of facework itself carry a strong moral, evaluation di-mension. Drawing evidence from her previous research con-cerning facework strategies in courtroom discourse, Penman proposes a hierarchical model that tracks the relationship be-tween face game and moral orders. She juxtaposes the paradox of courtroom interaction as the interplay between the fact game and the face game, and concurrently, the interplay of two moral orders—those of justice and honor. Penman ends the chapter with the reflection that the moral dimension of facework can be used perhaps to evaluate our communication theories and research in practice.

In chapter 3, Seiichi Morisaki and William B. Gudykunst compare and contrast the conceptualization of face in Japan and the United States. The term for face in Japan, *kao*, refers to (1) the physical part of the body, (2) one's personal name or status, and (3) social face. Social face, in turn, can be subdi-vided to refer to the appearance one presents to others (*tai-men*), or interdependent mutual face (*mentsu*). Drawing from the individualism-collectivism dimension (Triandis, 1990) and the independent and the interdependent construal of the self literature (Markus & Kitayama, 1989), they explicate the com-plexities of the relationship among cultural variability, self-construals, and face conceptualization.

They argue that while independent and interdependent construal of the self exist in both cultures, independent con-strual of the self tends to predominate in the United States and interdependent construal of the self tends to predominate in Japan. Extending this line of argument, they weave a com-prehensive picture of the self-construal concept and face (*mentsu*) in Japan and the United States. Issues such as per-sonal self-esteem and group self-esteem, emotions such as pride and shame, and identity dimensions such as desirable-undesirable and voluntary-involuntary are integrated with a detailed discussion of the cultural meaning of face. They con-clude by identifying the difficulties and the challenges that face all cross-cultural researchers in the search for the conceptual equivalence of the meanings of face and facework.

Hui-Ching Chang and G. Richard Holt (chapter 4) present a Chinese perspective on face as a fundamental, interpersonal

relationship issue. From the Chinese perspective, face is a dynamic, complex construct that is laden with both psychological and sociological meanings. Chang and Holt define face or *mien-tzu* as a quality claimed by the individual and accredited by society at large. Drawing from their ethnographic interview data, they examine the basic vocabularies, meanings, and functions of face and facework. They provide a lucid analysis of Chinese *mien-tzu* in the contexts of inter-relation (*kuan-hsi*) and human emotion (*ren-ching*). Based on the philosophical foundations of Confucianism, *mien-tzu* is viewed as both a burden and a lubricant of interpersonal relationship development. Chang and Holt build a fascinating case for the importance of studying face or *mien-tzu* from a cultural-specific perspective. They view face as a flexible symbolic resource that threads through the private versus the public domains, the ingroup versus the outgroup circles, and the personal versus the interpersonal goal orientations in Chinese culture. Chang and Holt end their chapter with the casting of face as a universal human communication phenomenon.

Drawing from the discourse literature, Ron Scollon and Suzie Wong Scollon (chapter 5) attempt to delineate the face parameters in Eastern and Western cultures. Based on their close examination of Asian and Western discourse patterns, they believe that marked discourse difference exists between the East and the West. They identify three default face parameters that closely affect East-West discourse pattern, namely: relationship, hierarchy, and ratification of face relationship. They argue that the differential assumptions between Asian and Western cultures concerning the relative emphasis on information and relationship, the hierarchical nature of interpersonal roles, and the contrast between negotiation and ratification of such roles pave the way to East-West discourse miscommunication. They conclude with a thoughtful discussion concerning the various boundary conditions of "self" in Asian and Western cultures and how these distinctive conceptualizations of "self" affect the moral basis of communication in Eastern and Western discourse.

Susan Shimanoff (chapter 6) examines facework through a detailed discussion of female and male differences in politeness discourse. She defines facework as "behaviors which establish, enhance, threaten, or diminish the images/identities of communicators." She reviews the previous research which has made explicit reference to politeness or facework and gender,

and compares and contrasts different approaches to the study
of facework and gender. With a conscientious, fine-tuned anal-
ysis of results of over 100 research studies, she finds that re-
search on gender and politeness has not provided consistent
results concerning the relationship between gender and polite-
ness. More importantly, most studies do not draw upon any
theoretical underpinnings for explaining the possible female
and male expectational differences on politeness. Based on a
face-needs theoretical model, Shimanoff reviews some of her
own work on emotional expressiveness and responsiveness.
She concludes that while females in her research tend to report
that they disclose more face-threatening emotions than males,
in actual conversations, females and males in these studies
communicate about emotions equally. Furthermore, both fe-
males and males have the same rank order for the relative face-
value of different types of emotional disclosures, even when
females actually self-reported that they engaged in more di-
verse emotional disclosures than males. By applying both func-
tional (i.e., issues of approval, autonomy, and competence face)
and sociological (i.e., issues such as sex-role expectations,
status difference, and social distance) approaches as exten-
sions to the face-needs' model, Shimanoff cogently persuades
us that the face-needs model may provide us with the key to un-
ravel the complexities of facework differences and similarities
across the gender divide.

Moving beyond the gender level of facework discussion,
Tae-Seop Lim (chapter 7) focuses on the interpersonal aspects
of facework strategy selection. Lim defines face as the positive
image that a person claims for him/herself. He observes that
face is a public, not a private phenomenon. Face also is con-
cerned with one's projected image which may or may not be
concurrent with others' assessments of one's face identity. In
addition, face is cast in terms of claimed positive, rather than
negative, social values. Drawing from his previous research
(Lim and Bowers, 1991), Lim identifies the three basic types of
face: autonomy, fellowship, and competence. Facework is de-
fined as the actions taken to deal with the face wants of one
and/or the other. While autonomy face is addressed by *tact* face-
work, fellowship face is supported by *solidarity* strategy type,
and competence face is addressed by *approbation* strategy
type. Using the dimensions of face-giving, face-withdrawing,
face-moderation, and face-disregarding, specific verbal tactics
that reflect tact, solidarity, and approbation facework types are

explained. Ten theoretical propositions are formulated based on a discussion of the essential determinants of the concept of face-threat legitimacy (status difference, relational intimacy, and role right). He concludes the chapter by appealing to the importance of studying the role of intention in the effective management of interpersonal facework relationships.

Moving beyond the social cognitive realm of facework strategies, Robert J. Edelmann (chapter 8) discusses embarrassment and face-saving strategies in social interaction. Embarrassment is viewed as a state in which a person has failed to maintain an appropriate identity and has, in short, lost face. Face-saving, in this context, refers to all those "social actions both verbal and nonverbal taken by both the actor and observer to overcome feelings of embarrassment in an attempt to regain social composure and the smooth flow of interaction." Embarrassment can be elicited by external cues (e.g., a faux pas, impropriety, and social transgression) or internal cues (e.g., bodily, facial cues and associated cognitions). In a detailed review of the classification schemes of embarrassing events, Edelmann is able to distill four major categories to classify embarrassing events: (1) individual behavior, actor or actress responsible, (2) interactive behavior, shared responsibility, (3) audience provocation, observer responsible, and (4) audience behavior, observer responsible. In carefully sifting through the face-saving strategy literature, five main categories of face-saving are identified: apologies (including remediation), accounts (including excuses and justifications), avoidance (including escape), humor (including laughter) and aggression. The relationship between embarrassing event type and mediating factors (such as gender, status, culture, and propensity to blush) on face-saving strategy used is examined. In closing his chapter, Edelmann directs our attention to several fruitful areas of research that can enrich our understanding of embarrassing events, facework strategies, and interactant/observer reactions.

From conceptualization to operationalization, David Yau-Fai Ho (chapter 9) attempts to bridge the conceptualization of facework to address the measurement issues of face dynamics. In fact, he sees the word "facework" as such a static term that he (personal communication) proposes henceforth we should use the concept "face dynamics" to replace "facework". Drawing from his cross-cultural psychology background, he calls forth a radical repositioning of the study of face and facework from a

methodological relationalism perspective. In his relational conception of face dynamics, face is a field concept and a sociometric concept. Face, as a field concept, includes the following domains: (1) actions by the individuals, either self-initiated or in response to those of others, (2) actions by others closely associated with the individual, (3) actions directed at the individual by people whom the individual is interacting with, (4) actions directed at the individual by people closely associated with those with whom the individual is interacting, and (5) actions directed at people closely associated with the individual by those with whom the individual is interacting directly or indirectly. Face, in these embedded relational contexts, is viewed as a dynamic field wherein relational forces and counterforces shape and unfold the "multiple faces" of the actors in the social arena. Ho conceptualizes face as a universal phenomenon. He argues that any individual who does not wish to renounce the social nature of her/his existence must show a fundamental regard for face. However, the criteria by which a person's face is judged are rooted in specific cultural values, and hence, are culture-relative. On the operationalization level, Ho recommends ten classes of attributes to be collected in the study of face dynamics. While his recommendations are not measurement-specific (i.e., specific interview or survey items), they spark some stimulating directions for future research in the inquiry of face and facework within and across cultural lines.

In Chapter 10, Karen Tracy and Sheryl Baratz argue for the advantages of studying face and facework using a case study approach. After a careful review of Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory, they critique the theory on grounds that the theory "forces researchers a priori to impose face concerns on interactants" and the model "decontextualizes individual utterances and facework strategies, and promotes the assumption that the relationship between discourse strategies and face concerns is universally fixed and unproblematic." In using a case study as an exemplar to their approach to the study of facework, they illustrate how through the systematic analysis of interview transcripts, they are able to locate specific face concerns of the participants in the setting. In addition, according to Tracy and Baratz, the case study approach resists the temptation to oversimplify the complexity of facework with predetermined theoretical lens. Finally, they convincingly argue that through in-depth open-ended inter-

views and participant observation methods, they are able to unpack the identity attribution process and the situational factors that impinge upon the facework setting. They conclude that the extension of the scope of the basic facework case study and the reconsideration of a broader facework process pose as two challenging directions for future communication scholars.

The book concludes with chapter 11, in which Ting-Toomey and Cocroft invite researchers who are interested in face and facework research to engage in an open dialogue across boundaries. In addition, by drawing upon the ideas from various chapters in the book, several conceptual and methodological directions and challenges for future theorizing and researching in face and facework are mapped out and proffered.

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