The Chinese term 'minzi' is not widely used in part of current Chinese communication literature. As a result, the importance of face concern in Chinese communication is often overlooked. In this chapter, we first present the current conceptualization of 'minzi' in Chinese culture. Then we discuss the implications of the concept for communication. We then examine various implications of the concept for intercultural communication. Finally, we discuss the implications of the concept for current communication practices.

Notes

1. The distinction between the speaker and the listener is artificial but necessary.

2. One study appears to be inconsistent with the current American paradigm.
1988). Ting-Toomey argues that both face and facework address projected self-respect and other-consideration issues. People in all cultures try to maintain and negotiate face in all communicative situations, and the concept of face is especially problematic in uncertainty situations (such as request, embarrassment, or conflict situations) when the situated identities of the communicators are called into question (Ting-Toomey, 1988). "Saving face" and "losing face" are two dimensions of face.

In addition to Ting-Toomey's work on face, several other approaches have been developed throughout the years (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Cupach & Metts, 1994; Goffman, 1955; Ho, 1976; Hu, 1944; Lim, 1994; Lim & Bowers, 1991). One approach specifically addresses the issue of face contents (Lim & Bowers, 1991). Lim and Bowers propose that all human beings have three distinct face wants: (a) autonomy face (i.e., the want not to be imposed on), (b) fellowship face (i.e., the want to be included), and (c) competence face (i.e., the want that their abilities be respected). Different types of face want promote the use of different facework strategies.

People in individualistic and collectivistic cultures assign different meanings to the content notions of face. Individualists tend to emphasize nonimposition by others, noninclusion of others, and self-presentational facework competence. In comparison, collectivists tend to emphasize nonimposition of self on others, inclusion of others, and other-directed facework competence. In individualistic cultures, face is associated mostly with self-worth, self-presentation, and self-value, whereas in collectivistic cultures face is concerned more about what others think of one's worth, especially in the context of one's in-group and out-group, than about oneself. In collectivistic cultures, face means projected social image and social self-respect. More specifically, in Chinese culture, gaining and losing face is connected closely with issues of social pride, honor, dignity, insult, shame, disgrace, humility, trust, mistrust, respect, and prestige.

Loose and tight social structures also influence how face is conceptualized. A tight social structure refers to "the extent members of a culture (a) agree about what constitutes correct action,

(b) must behave exactly according to the norms of the culture, and (c) suffer or offer severe criticism for even slight deviations from norms" (Pelto as cited in Triandis, 1995, p. 52). A wide latitude for deviation and variation, however, exists in a culture that has a loose social structure. Consequently, a "face-losing" act is more likely to be stigmatized and to bring disgrace and humiliation to a person in a culture with a tight social structure than in a culture with a loose social structure.

In Chinese culture, the notion of face is embedded in two Chinese concepts: lian (脸) and mian (面) or mian zi (面子). The literal translation of lian is "face," whereas "image" serves as an equivalent of mian zi. Hu (1944) defines lian as something that "represents the confidence of society in the integrity of ego's moral character, the loss of which makes it impossible for him [or her] to function properly within the community" (p. 45). Lian, Hu notes, "is both a social sanction for enforcing moral standards and an internalized sanction" (p. 45). Mian or mian zi, however, "stands for the kind of prestige that is emphasized in [the United States]: A reputation achieved through getting on in life, through success and ostentation" (p. 45). In other words, this definition of mian zi corresponds more closely to that of face found in both past and current literature. Consistent with Hu's distinction, King and Myers (1977) view mian zi as social or positional face and lian as a moral face. Having or not having mian zi is externalized and conditioned by how successful one is in meeting established social rules, whereas lian tends to be internalized.

In Chinese discourse, the concepts of lian and mian zi evoke very different meanings. For example, lian is often associated with aspects of personal integrity and the moral character of a person and is used in its negative form bu yao lian (不要脸; "no face need," meaning shameless) (Gao, in press). The expression bu yao lian is a specific and direct condemnation of one's personal integrity and moral character that often has a very negative connotation in Chinese culture. To Chinese, you lian (有脸; "to have face") is essential to being a human. It is, however, the loss of lian that endures serious consequences in various aspects of a person's life. The loss of lian often brings shame or disgrace not only to the
Chinese discourse illustrates the importance of the concept of "face" in Chinese culture. As a pervasive concept, "face" is connected to the Chinese concept of self-esteem, which is integral to the formation of self-worth and identity. In Chinese culture, the notion of face is expressed in the context of social interaction, as well as in the concept of "zhong" (中), which refers to the middle path. In Chinese discourse, the concept of "face" is closely tied to the notion of "zhong," which includes the idea of balance and harmony.

The concept of "face" in Chinese discourse is multifaceted, encompassing both positive and negative aspects. It is a measure of social status and personal integrity. When someone loses "face," it can be interpreted as being "down to earth." In Chinese culture, there is a pronounced distinction between the use of "face" in personal and public contexts. The concept of "face" also applies to the Chinese family (家人) and the concept of "face" is connected closely to the Chinese self-esteem, which is central to the Chinese self-concept and one's personality development.

In Chinese culture, a person's self-concept is connected closely with the concept of "face." The expression of "face" in Chinese discourse is often used to show one's personal integrity and social status. This concept is central to the Chinese approach to social interaction, as well as to the concept of "zhong," which emphasizes balance and harmony. In Chinese discourse, the concept of "face" is connected closely to the Chinese family (家人) and the concept of "face" is connected closely to the Chinese self-esteem, which is central to the Chinese approach to social interaction, as well as to the concept of "zhong," which emphasizes balance and harmony.
anxiety, and tension; difficulty in concentrating on work; and symptoms such as blushing are related to losing face (Redding & Ng, 1982).

Chinese also employ mian zi as social capital to make requests and to gain compliance. As social capital, face “can be either ‘thick’ or ‘thin,’ weighed, contested, borrowed, given, augmented, diminished” (Young, 1994, p. 19). When one’s face is put forth in the formulation of a request, rejection is less likely to occur. Consider the following example: “Xiao Geng has helped me a lot for the last 2 years. To give me mian zi, would you please do him this favor?” (Gao, in press). The employment of one’s face in making a request is also evident in the following account (Redding & Ng, 1982):

I telephone them to ask them to give me face by attending the seminar. We Chinese usually say ‘please give me face and honor us with your presence.’ . . . I also arrange the front seats for the more important companies’ representatives as a gesture of giving them more face than others. (p. 212)

The nature of a relationship also determines whether mian zi should be given or be contested. It is often more difficult to contest the mian zi of a familiar one than that of an unfamiliar one, as demonstrated in the following respondent’s narrative (Redding & Ng, 1982): “Recently, a secretary introduced her younger brother into my department. He is not the type of subordinate I want, but I took him only because I had to give face to his sister” (p. 212).

Chiang (1989) argues that the Chinese tradition is more concerned with face than credibility, and Chinese would be most likely to sacrifice “confidence building” for the sake of “face-saving.” A well-known Chinese expression, da zhong lian chong pang zi (打肿脸充胖子; “to make your face swell to pretend that you are a fat man”), attests to the truth of Chiang’s argument. To save face, Chinese are inclined to engage in exaggerated, magnified, and highly colored discourse. For example, a Chinese would portray a strained relationship as one that is happy and satisfying. Chinese would say “yes” to something that they disagree with. To Chinese as Bond and Lee (1981) argue, protecting another person’s face is more important than one’s belief of truth or correctness, one’s own image, or the risk of being misjudged by others as “uncritical” or “partial.” “To put up a front and pretend to be what they are not” (Chiang, 1989, p. 14) characterizes the Chinese “mian zi syndrome.” Numerous stories have been told about Chinese families that cannot afford to give elaborate and flashy wedding banquets but insist on doing so just to impress others. Mian zi syndrome can indeed create its own set of problems.

One’s concern for face also governs what one does and does not disclose in personal relationships. Clear boundaries of self-disclosure exist in Chinese culture as demonstrated in the expression jia chou bu ke wai yang (家丑不可外扬; “Family disgrace should not be revealed to the outsider”). To avoid the threat of losing face, Chinese tend not to reveal their personal or family disgrace to others. Incidents of misbehavior or wrongdoing are often concealed. As a result, one rarely hears a Chinese person discuss topics such as a dysfunctional family, poor relationships between parents, or sibling rivalry. Various face-saving strategies thus operate in Chinese relationships to protect the need for face.

Furthermore, “face want” serves to regulate a person’s behavior. Engaging in appropriate behavior is of concern to most Chinese, especially those whose selves are other oriented and relationally defined. In Chinese culture, inappropriate behavior often results in others’ negative remarks and thus brings a loss of face to the person. Acting appropriately entails a prudent consideration of any potential consequences of one’s behavior. For example, if one initiates a relationship, then termination becomes a face-threatening act for the initiator. The concern for face influences not only relationship initiation but also its development and deterioration. Hence, the importance of face want has a controlling effect on Chinese behavior. Smith (1991), for example, observes that Chinese families in modern Taiwan constantly evalu-
Chinese communication strategies (direct communication) and the importance of manz i in Chinese culture with children. When communicating with Chinese, direct communication and manz i are essential.

Cultural Differences: Direct Communication vs. Indirect Communication

Direct communication emphasizes honesty and straightforwardness, whereas indirect communication focuses on maintaining harmony and relationships. In Chinese culture, manz i (face-saving) plays a crucial role in communication, and it is often necessary to avoid direct criticisms or confrontations that could damage one's reputation or social standing.

In Chinese culture, it is important to maintain a positive image and avoid causing offense. This is why indirect communication is often preferred, as it allows for the expression of ideas or concerns in a more subtle and respectful manner. Overall, understanding the importance of manz i and direct communication strategies is essential when communicating with Chinese, especially with children.

Non-confrontation

When communicating with Chinese children, it is important to avoid confrontations and direct criticism. Instead, it is recommended to use indirect communication and focus on maintaining positive relationships. This approach helps to ensure that the child feels safe and valued, and it also allows for the expression of thoughts and ideas in a more constructive and respectful manner.

Pressures for Social Success

In Chinese culture, there is a strong emphasis on academic achievement and social success. Children are often under pressure to excel in their studies and meet the expectations of their family and community. This can create a sense of stress and anxiety, which can affect their overall well-being.

It is important for parents and caregivers to recognize these pressures and provide support and encouragement. This can include fostering a positive learning environment, celebrating successes, and providing opportunities for children to explore their interests and passions.

SUMMARY

In summary, understanding the importance of manz i in Chinese culture and direct communication strategies is crucial when communicating with Chinese children. By adopting a non-confrontational approach and focusing on maintaining positive relationships, parents and caregivers can help to create a supportive and encouraging environment that promotes healthy growth and development.

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identified: self-face, other face, and mutual face (Ting-Toomey, 1988). Ting-Toomey argues that people in collectivistic cultures are more concerned with other face compared with those in individualistic cultures. Concern for other face often leads to a nonconfrontational style of conflict management, such as avoiding, obliging, and compromising. Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese report a higher degree of obliging and avoiding styles of conflict management than do their U.S. counterparts (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). That is, the relational self either avoids face-threatening situations or seeks some type of compromise so as not to make the interdependent parties lose face. This strategy of conflict management not only enables both parties to preserve harmony but also helps affirm the relational identity of the self. When relationships are “intact,” the self does not lose because “one can be serving oneself as one serves others” (Bond, 1993, p. 256).

Criticisms are a predominant domain of conflict that requires care and prudence because of its implications for face. It is often not easy to achieve the delicate balance between face and criticism, as described by one U.S. returnee trained in Chomskyan linguistics (Redding & Ng, 1982): “When I work with my colleagues, I have to be extra careful about how I mix professional comments with considerations of their face. This can be frustrating” (p. 217). In Chinese culture, criticism is often perceived as effectively based and relational in nature. This perception coincides with the belief that ideas are not materials for discussion, validation, interpretation, or evaluation. Young (1994) contends that “Chinese regard one’s ideas as entangled with one’s identity or sense of personal worth; an attack on one’s ideas is therefore an attack on one’s self, or, more specifically, one’s face” (p. 125).

Therefore, unless it can be avoided, criticism must be approached in an indirect manner. To construct and present criticism in a nonthreatening, face-saving, and gentle manner is a highly desirable interpersonal skill. Hedging strategies, such as (a) disqualifying oneself as a competent critic, (b) using an indirect approach, and (c) making many references to the virtues and skills of the superior before giving criticism, are essential to fulfilling the job and, concurrently, to protecting the face of those who are criticized.

Mian Zi (Bond & Lee, 1981). For example, consider the following insightful observation from a retired head of an academic institute in China (Young, 1994):

Chinese generally try to avoid direct confrontation, try not to make the other person look bad. So they often look for points on which there might be agreement or similarity, even if the other person is thought to be ninety-nine percent wrong. This might be considered a manifestation of the “live and let live” philosophy. By so doing, you are also protecting yourself because in your own arguments or writings you may not be one hundred percent correct. You would wish these to be pointed out in a nonhumiliating face-saving way. (p. 125)

COMPLIANCE STRATEGIES

One’s concern for face also affects how disagreements or arguments are handled in a relational context. To “give others face” requires one not to argue or disagree overtly with others in public, especially in the presence of a superior. Thus, for Chinese, meanings in messages cannot be negotiated in public. To negotiate conceivable meanings in public is to question the authority and threaten interpersonal harmony. In business negotiations, for example, any proposal-counterproposal style of negotiating is avoided (Hellweg, Samovar, & Skow, 1991). To Chinese, public disagreement is a face-losing act. Consequently, when one is unavoidably involved in an argument with a friend, it becomes difficult for them to remain friends. To protect face and to preserve interpersonal harmony, as well as the cohesion of the group, Chinese tend to adopt an unassertive style of communication in interpersonal interactions. Chinese have learned to be strategically unassertive by articulating their intentions in an indirect manner and leaving room for negotiations in private. This style of communication not only enables them to accomplish their own agenda but also creates an amicable climate for future cooperation and negotiation. In Chinese culture, assertiveness does not have the positive connotations found in other cultures. Being assertive
Using Intermediaries

Process:

Successful Chinese communication is contingent on a mutual understanding of the intentions and feelings of both parties. This requires careful consideration of cultural nuances and the appropriate use of intermediaries. Communication in Chinese culture is often indirect and relies heavily on non-verbal cues and context. Understanding these subtleties is crucial for effective communication.

Provisional Responses

Carneia, 1987:

"Chinese culture views face as morally less worthy (translated as "face") in the real personal relationship as in the minimal face. Compared with other relational models, Chinese communication is more important than house and contextual, and Chinese communication is considered more important than house and contextual behavior in Chinese culture. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain the face of both parties.

The concept of face in Chinese communication is also context-dependent. The perception of accuracy and clarity is the ultimate goal of interaction.

Ward, 1976, 1992:

Face-saving, sometimes even at the cost of accuracy, is a characteristic of Chinese communication. The importance of face protection and consideration is evident even in the face of obstacles. For example, when faced with a difficult situation, Chinese may avoid direct confrontation to preserve the face of the other party. Thus, direct and confrontational communication may not be as effective in Chinese culture.

In conclusion, the concept of face in Chinese communication is deeply ingrained and influences all aspects of interaction. Understanding these nuances is crucial for effective communication in Chinese culture.