FACEWORK, GENDER, AND ONLINE DISCUSSION: A NEGOTIATION PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

$\mathcal{T}$he purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between facework behavior ("the communicative strategies one uses to enact self-face and to uphold, support, or challenge another person's face" [Oetzel et al. 2000, p. 398]) and online discussion outcomes, and to determine the effect gender may have on the relationship. In an empirical study of facework behaviors and online discussion outcomes, 103 participants used an online discussion board to discuss a controversial topic. Over a two-week period, participants interacted through a discussion board. Study results show that for males the facework behaviors that affect discussion outcomes are more direct and confrontational, while for females the facework behaviors that affect discussion outcomes are less direct and confrontational—gender and facework behavior interact in influencing discussion outcomes. The study of facework behaviors during online discussion is in its infancy.

Keywords: Face, Facework, Gender, Online Discussion, Conflict, Negotiation

Previous studies have focused on participants' recollections of face-to-face (FtF) discussions. This research analyzed the influence of facework behaviors in an online setting. Applications of this study's findings to negotiations are explained.

1.Introduction

Deutsch (1961, p. 897) claims that "face is one of an individual's most sacred possessions". Negotiation is an area where *face* is important, due to the multiple opportunities where one's face can be threatened (White et al., 2004). The concept of face should be part of a theory of negotiation processes and outcomes (Wilson, 1992). Growth of Internet use, e-business, e-marketplaces, and interest in using web-based systems has motivated studies in a diverse range of academic fields (Kersten and Lai, 2007). Even though this study focuses on online discussions, it has implications for online-conflict settings, such as online negotiations, as well.

1.1 Face is an important, yet vulnerable, resource during conflict interactions (Oetzel et al., 2000) and negotiations (White et al., 2004). Goffman (1967) defined face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (p. 5). In conflict situations, including negotiations, people engage in *facework* (i.e., specific face-related communication behaviors) to challenge, protect, and otherwise manage the self-presentations upon which their shared social identities are based (Oetzel et al., 2000, 2001). Everyone has face concerns, and managing face is especially critical during conflicts (Ting-Toomey, 2005).

1.2 Conflict—that is, perceived incompatibilities of values, expectations, processes, or outcomes (Boulding, 1963)—can arise during the interactions of participants in any discussion including online ones. Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) state that conflicts are difficult to manage in technological environments, due to the absence of the social controls experienced by face-to-face (FtF) teams. *1.3 Negotiation* is an area of interaction in which face is important, given the numbers of opportunities that can arise for a person's face to be threatened (White et al., 2004). Face can be threatened in situations that involve opening moves, exchanging information, responding to opponents' tactics, adjusting to constituent feedback, or offering concessions (Wilson, 1992). Moreover, negotiations allow students to produce shared solutions to disagreements during learning-related conflicts (Piaget 1977).

1.4 Discussions occur as an essential part of the negotiation process, which entails phases including preparation, discussion, proposal, bargaining and closing (Fowler, 1998) and/or planning, agenda setting and exploring the field, exchanging offers and arguments, reaching agreement, and concluding the negotiations Kersten et al. (2004). For example, in the agenda setting and exploring the field phase, negotiators must discuss the issues to be negotiated and their meanings, the protocols they will follow, the timing of their exchanges, and various deadlines, priorities, and constraints for the negotiation (Kersten et al., 2004).

With the preceding in mind, the research reported in this paper was guided by two questions:

1. What relationships exist between facework behaviors and online discussion outcomes?
2. How could gender affect whatever relationships exist?

The following sections explain existing research and theorizing concerning the ideas reflected in the model.

2.Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Face

The origin of the concept of face is Chinese, but it has different meanings and usages across cultures. Face represents the social image presented to others (Oetzel et al., 2001). Face is an important concept in diverse areas such as: politeness (e.g., Brown and Levinson, 1987), compliance gaining (e.g., Baxter, 1984), conflict (e.g., Oetzel et al., 2001; Oetzel and Ting-Toomey, 2003), face-negotiation theory (e.g., Ting-Toomey, 1988), and negotiations (Wilson, 1992).

Goffman (1967, p. 5) defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact." For Deutsch (1961) and Goffman (1955), face is carried with the individual into his/her social encounters. Brown and Levinson (1987) define face as "the

public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (p. 66). Following from this, Lim (1994) states that face has three characteristics:

1. It is not private, it is public. Face is not about what one thinks about oneself, it is about what one thinks others should think about one.
2. It is related to one's projected image, which may or may not coincide with another's assessment of one's real self.
3. It is defined in terms of positive social values.

For Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998), face is the claimed sense of a favorable social self-worth and/or projected other worth in social interactions. Based on Oetzel et al. (2000), face is a vulnerable resource that represents an individual's claimed sense of positive image in the context of social interaction. Face can be lost, saved, or protected, and every person wants to present and protect his/her own public images (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1967; Ting-Toomey, 1988). A study by Oetzel et al. (2007), comparing participants from China, Japan, Germany and the United States, supports the proposition that participants across the cultures want to maintain face.

During conflicts, face is negotiated, covertly in most cases, while people focus on substantive issues. Face has three levels, which are: affective (e.g., feelings/emotions), behavioral (facework), and cognitive (e.g., whether and how much face to give or receive) (Oetzel et al., 2007).

2.2   Face and Interpersonal Relationships

Prior studies show that face loss has direct consequences on future interpersonal interactions (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Hodgins et al. 1996). In a study about the role of emotions on the impact of face loss on relationship deterioration between the Chinese and Americans, Kam and Bond (2008) found that face loss accounted for 27% (US) and 35% (Hong Kong) of the variance in relationship deterioration. Even though Chinese participants had higher relationship deterioration due to face loss, for the US participants face loss accounted for more than a quarter of variance in relationship deterioration. In another study, Lin (2010) shows that acting to maintain participants' face in a relationship is critical to maintaining harmonious relationships.

1.4   2.3 Face-Negotiation Theory

Theories and models explaining face and facework (viz.: Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Cupach and Metts, 1994; 1994; Lim and Bowers, 1991) have limitations for the study of facework in conflict. Specifically, the models offered by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Lim and Bowers (1991) focus on general facework behaviors. They have not been applied to conflict situations (Oetzel et al., 2000).

Face-negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 1988; Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998) argues that face is important across cultures during conflicts. The basic assumptions of face-negotiation theory (Oetzel et al., 2000) are:

1. People in all cultures negotiate face during communication situations
2. Face plays an important role in uncertainty situations, such as conflict
3. Situational variables influence the use of facework behaviors in interpersonal and intergroup encounters.

Concerns about face play an important role in the understanding of face and facework, because they help to determine the interests of individuals and the content of their messages in terms of a specific behavioral presence (Rogan and Hammer, 1994). In that sense, politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) focuses on others' face. In contrast, face-negotiation theory incorporates two additional face concerns: self-face and mutual-face. Self-face refers to concerns for one's own image. Other-face refers to concerns for another's image. Finally, mutual-face is the simultaneous concern for the images of both parties.

1.5 **2.4 Facework**

Goffman (1967) defines facework as "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face" (p. 12). According to Oetzel et al. (2000, p. 398), facework amounts to "the communicative strategies one uses to enact self-face and to uphold, support, or challenge another person's face." Lim (1994, p. 211) defines facework as "the actions taken to deal with the face-wants of one and/or another." During conflicts, facework can be used to resolve, exacerbate, or avoid a conflict, to threaten or challenge another person's position, to protect a person's image, or even to manage shared social identity (Oetzel et al., 2007).

A concept closely related to facework is *conflict style*. Although similar in nature, facework behaviors refer to specific strategies, above and beyond a conflict situation, concerned with a person's claimed positive social image, while conflict style involves a general pattern of behaviors used during conflicts. Moreover, conflict style can include some facework behaviors (Oetzel et al., 2000; Oetzel et al., 2007).

Oetzel et al. (2000) completed a multi-stage study that identified 13 types of facework behaviors during conflicts, where the participants were asked to describe a recent conflict situation with a stranger or a best friend. These are: 1. AGGRESSION, 2. APOLOGIZE, 3. AVOID, 4. COMPROMISE, 5. CONSIDER THE OTHER, 6. DEFEND SELF, 7. EXPRESS FEELINGS, 8. GIVE IN, 9. INVOLVE A THIRD PARTY, 10. PRETEND, 11. PRIVATE DISCUSSION, 12. REMAIN CALM, and 13. TALK ABOUT THE PROBLEM. Later, Oetzel et al. (2001) reduced the typology from 13 to 11. These eleven facework behaviors are listed next. 1. *Aggression*: insulting, hurting, or ridiculing another, telling the other that he/she is wrong or stupid.

2. *Problem solve* (a combination of the facework behaviors "13. Talk about the problem" and "4. Compromise"): attempting to resolve a conflict through compromising or integrating viewpoints.

3. *Third party*: involving an outside person to help to resolve the conflict.

4. *Apologize:* admitting that one made a mistake during the conflict and telling the other about it.

5. *Defend*: defending one's position without giving in.

6. *Respect*: showing sensitivity, being attentive, and listening to the other person.

7. *Pretend*: pretending the there is no conflict or that one is not upset or hurt by what has happened.

8. *Remain calm*: trying to keep one's composure, stay calm, and unemotional during a conflict.

9. *Give in*: accommodating the other person and letting them win during the conflict.

10. *Express emotions*: expressing how one is feeling without defending or attacking the other.

11. *Private discussion*: refusing to talk about the problem in public.

In prior studies related to face and facework (Oetzel et al., 2000; Oetzel et al., 2001; Oetzel and Ting-Toomey, 2003; and Oetzel et al., 2007), researchers gathered information asking what participants could recall from a past conflict, perhaps with a parent, siblings, best friends, etc. Even though it is not stated explicitly, it is reasonable to assume that this refers to conflicts during FtF interactions. In 2010, Baranova studied facework in organizational conflicts by asking participants about hypothetical FtF situations. Walsh et al. (2003) asked questions to students based on a conflictive scenario in an online learning environment.

1.6   **2.5 Gender Influences on Teams**

1.7   *Gender has been shown to play a role in the nature of some teams. For instance, Rodelberg and Rumery (1996) observe that team decision quality increases as the number of men increases in the team. Pelled (1996) finds that teams with members from both genders display more relationship conflicts than teams that did not include both. Wood et al. (1985) suggest that males generate more solutions to tasks where ideas generation are required, while females generate better solutions to tasks where a team's consensus is required. Deeter-Schmetz et al. (2002) report that gender diversity influences team performance, and teams with members from the same gender are more effective than teams with members from both genders. Gender influences interactions between team members. Hutson-Comeaux and Kelly (1996) report that female team members are more likely to engage in positive socio-emotional behavior (referring to group identity, tension management, and the categorization of friendliness, dramatizations and agreement), while males are likely to engage in task-related behavior (referring to offering suggestions, opinions, and information).*

1.8   **2.6 e-negotiation Systems (ENS)**

An ENS is defined as "software that employs internet technologies and it is deployed on the web for the purpose of facilitating, organizing, supporting and/or automating activities undertaken by the negotiators and/or a third party" (Kersten and Lai, 2007). The Internet and the Web have allowed the creation of virtual laboratories in which people from around the world can communicate and interact. Kersten and Lai (2007) assert that researchers are interested in the development of software to study online communication in negotiations.

Several ENS software applications have been developed for use in negotiations:

- Inspire is an ENS based on functions from Negotiation Support Systems used to study bilateral e-negotiations. So far, Inspire has been used for 6000 users in 62 countries.
- Web-HIPRE (Mustajoki et al. 2004) uses multi-attribute value theory model to create a hierarchical model of the problem attributes and the objective of the participants in order to facilitate the understanding of the problem.
- WebNS (Yuan et al. 1998) focuses on the structuring of text-based messages in addition to the specification of and discussion of issues. One of WebNS's features is the possibility to introduce an entity responsible for monitoring the messages' exchanges between the negotiators, facilitates the interaction and providing advice between the parties (Kersten and Lai, 2007).

1.9   **2.7 Outcomes**

The outcome variables included in this study are *Team Cohesion, Outcome Satisfaction, Process Satisfaction,* and *Face Loss*. Powell et al. (2004), Martins et al. (2004), and Webster and Stapples (2006) reviewed a total of 324 studies about virtual teams. These authors, using the inputs-processes-outcomes (I-P-O) model as an analysis framework, establish that cohesion is an important aspect of virtual teams. In this study, *Team Cohesion* refers to the perceived level of group cohesion). In addition, Powell et al. (2004), Martins et al. (2004), and Webster and Stapples (2006) also established that satisfaction—which may influence participants' willingness to collaborate and contribute to future team projects (Hackman, 1989)—is a frequently studied virtual-team outcome. This study includes two satisfaction measures. *Outcome Satisfaction* (i.e., the participant's degree of satisfaction with the results of the team's work) and *Process Satisfaction* (i.e., the participant's perceived satisfaction with general group functioning). Being *face* the target of the facework behaviors, *Face Loss* (it is defined as deterioration in one's social image (Kam and Bond, 2008, p. 175)) was measured.

The research model in Figure 1 provides an overview of the concepts involved and the relationships investigated in this work.

Figure 1 – Research Model
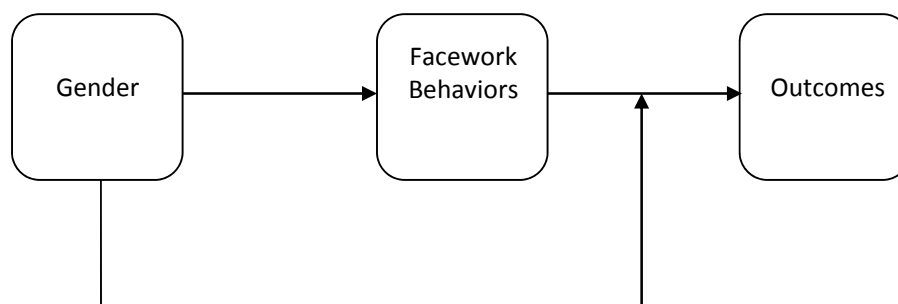
3.Methodology

1.10 **3.1 Participants**

Out of 143 undergraduate students registered in a "Management Information Systems" course at a Western US University, 103 (72%) wrote six or more posts to an online discussion board used in the course, and completed the survey associated with this research. The sample comprised 50 males and 52 females (1 missing). 90.1% of the participants were between 20 and 25 years. Participants were randomly assigned to groups of 4 or 5 members each. Individuals were randomly assigned to teams; there was not balance between males and females on each team.

1.11 **3.2 Data collection**

For an assignment, team members interacted through a discussion board, choosing and discussing one of two topics that were selected by the researchers to generate discussion conflict. In addition to discussion, participants were required to write explanations for their support/opposition to their topic. At the end of the assignment, team members had to come up with a unified team position about the topic. Following this interaction, participants completed a questionnaire. To get full credit for participation, each participant had to contribute at least six posts (i.e., discussion comments) on the discussion board.

1.12 **3.3 Measures**

Key variables that encompass the outcomes analyzed in this study were *Team Cohesion*, *Outcome Satisfaction*, *Process Satisfaction*, and *Face Loss*. These measures relate to the dependent variables.

Team Cohesion. Team cohesion was assessed with ten items using 10-point Likert scale. These items were adapted from Strijbos et al. (2007). The Cronbach's alpha for the team development in the Strijbos et al. (2007) study was $\alpha = .90$ and in this study was $\alpha = .95$.

Outcome Satisfaction. Outcome satisfaction was assessed with four item using 5-point Likert scale. These items were adapted from Liu et al. (2008), where 208 students, from an MBA program, were grouped in teams to work on an online assignment. The Cronbach's alpha for outcome satisfaction in the Liu et al. (2008) study was $\alpha = .72$ and in this study was $\alpha = .82$.

Process Satisfaction. Process satisfaction was assessed with six items using a 7-point Likert scale. These items were adapted from Strijbos et al. (2007), where 64 students participated in a study involving computer-supported collaborative learning. The Cronbach's alpha for the perceived process satisfaction in the Strijbos et al. (2007) study was $\alpha = .71$ in this study was $\alpha = .75$.

Face Loss. Face Loss was assessed with three items using a 7-point Likert scale. These items were adapted from Hui and Bond (2009), where they estimated $\alpha = .84$ for the participants from the US, and $\alpha = .82$ for the participants from Hong Kong. The Cronbach's alpha for face loss in this study was $\alpha = .89$.

The independent variables refer to the eleven facework behaviors explained above. For this study, these behaviors were measured with a reduced version of the original instrument (Ting-Toomey and Oetzel,

2001), with 33 out of the original 63 questions. (See Appendix 1). Initial work with the instrument, led researchers to believe that is was too long. Researchers reviewed the 63 questions and choose 33 as the more representative of the facework behaviors (3 questions for every facework behavior) with the idea to make the instrument shorter. The Cronbach's alpha for the facework behaviors are: Remain Calm α = .62 (α = .68), Apologize α = .63 (α = .82), Private Discussion α = .52 (α = .64), Third Party α = .67 (α = .81), Defend α = .49 (α = .82), Aggression α = .82 (α = .89), Give in α = .67 (α = .69), Pretend α = .70 (α = .75), Express Emotions α = .71 (α = .70), Respect α = .57 (α = .79), and Problem Solve α = .61 (α = .89). The α values in parentheses are for the full-length version of the instrument from the Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001) study.

4.Results

Stepwise regressions were carried out for each outcome variable. In stepwise regressions, the orders in which predictors (facework behaviors) are entered into the model are based on the contribution of each one looking at significance value of the *t*-test for each predictor. According to Field (2009), stepwise regressions can be used for exploratory model building. The statistically significant results from this study are presented in Table 1.

	Males			Females		
Outcome Satisfaction	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Constant	3.06	0.55		3.03	0.45	
Express Emotions	0.32	0.15	.30*			
Private Discussion				0.30	0.14	.28*
R^2	.09			.08		
Process Satisfaction						
Constant	6.69	0.67				
Third Party	-0.48	0.20	-.31*			
R^2	.10					
Face Loss						
Constant				0.56	0.42	
Aggression				0.84	0.20	.51**
R^2				.26		
Team Cohesion						
Constant	9.99	0.62		6.00	1.03	
Pretend	-0.45	0.22	-.29*			
Private Discussion				0.69	0.33	.28*
R^2	.08			.08		

Notes: * p < 0.05 and ** p < 0.001

Table 1. Regression Analysis for the Online Discussion Teams Outcomes

Results suggest a difference between males and females in the facework behaviors that account for a significant variance in online discussion outcomes.

For males, the facework behaviors related to the different outcomes are relatively direct and confrontational, while for females the facework behaviors are less confrontational. *Express emotions* is the facework behavior related to *outcome satisfaction* in males (R^2 = .09), while it is *private discussion* for females (R^2 = .08).

In the case of *process satisfaction*, the difference between genders is more evident, since this outcome was only related to *third party* for males ($R^2 = 0.10$); no facework behavior was related to *process satisfaction* for females. For males the higher the level of *third party* involvement, the lower *process satisfaction* is.

Face loss represents an interesting outcome for females, where *aggression* ($R^2 = 0.26$) predicts a high percentage of the variance. No facework behavior was related to *face loss* for males.

Pretend explains variance in *team cohesion* for males ($R^2 = .08$), but *private discussion* does for females ($R^2 = .08$). In this study, the more males *pretend,* the lower the team cohesion. This is consistent with the case of outcome satisfaction, where males prefer a more confrontational process. For females, as in the case of outcome satisfaction, a higher level of private discussion is associated with higher team cohesion.

Results from the collinearity analysis, where the VIF values are well below 10 and the tolerance statistics all well above 0.2, led researchers to safely conclude that there is no collinearity within the data.

5.Discussion
The findings from this study are presented below, organized by outcome variables. Differences between results for males and females are highlighted.

First, this study shows that the facework behavior that influences *outcome satisfaction* for males is *express emotions*. It means that males are more satisfied if they express their emotions in the middle of the conflict "in front" of all team members; that is, the more males express their emotions, the higher their satisfaction. For females, the facework behavior that influences *outcome satisfaction* is *private discussion*, which means that the more females can deal with conflict in private, the more they are satisfied. In this case, the facework behaviors related to each gender are opposite.

Second, it was found that, in the case of males, the facework behavior *third party* is negatively related to *process satisfaction*. That is, the more the males involve a *third person* to solve a conflict, the less they will be satisfied with the process. For females, no facework behavior is significantly related to *process satisfaction*. Results suggest that males prefer a more direct, faster approach, apparently not valuing the intervention of a third person.

Third, this study shows that, for males, *face loss* is not related to any facework behavior. It might be possible to interpret this as a lack of concern by males about their *face*, but this conclusion would be difficult to accept, given existing theory. A possible explanation for what has occurred here is that the *ad hoc* nature of the groups created in this study led male participants not to worry much about their face. Meanwhile, the study shows that, for females, aggression is related to face loss, accounting for more than a quarter (26%) of the variance. The results here show that the more *aggression* there is, the more *face loss* there is. Face loss is thought to play an important role on relationship deterioration (Kam and Bond, 2008), which is related to relationship conflict. Furthermore, face loss has a negative effect on team performance (de Jong et al., 2008; de Dreu and Weingart, 2002), as well as on the likelihood the team will work together in the future (Jehn, 1995; Shah & Jehn, 1993).

Fourth, it was found that the facework behavior that had the strongest effect on *team cohesion,* in the case of males, was *pretend*. In this case, the relationship is negative—the more the males *pretend* during a conflict, the lower the *team cohesion*. For females, as in the case of the *outcome satisfaction*, the facework behavior related to *team cohesion* was *private discussion*—that is, the more the females deal with their conflicts in private, the higher the *team cohesion*. According to de Dreu and Weingart (2002), satisfaction is related to team cohesion. These results are aligned with de Dreu and Weingart (2002) statement because the results for *team cohesion* are similar to the results for *outcome satisfaction*. For females, the facework behavior related in both cases is the same (*Private Discussion*), while in the case of males the variable that has the strongest impact on *outcome satisfaction* is *express emotions*, while for *team cohesion* it is *pretend*. Nevertheless, we could consider that the facework behavior *pretend* may be aligned with *express emotions*, because males who do not *pretend* that there is not a conflict may be able to express their emotions.

In general, and from the analysis of the facework behaviors related to every one of the online discussion teams outcomes, for males the facework behaviors related to the different outcomes are more direct and confrontational, while for females the facework behaviors are less confrontational. This moderation of the relationship between facework behavior and online discussion outcomes is not totally surprising, because gender plays a regular, if not completely clear, role in teams. These results are aligned with the Hutson-Comeaux and Kelly (1996) study.

Conflicts can have positive and negative influence on groups and individuals. Conflicts arise when members of a team realize the discrepancies, incompatibilities, or irreconcilable desires between them (Boulding, 1963). Conflict may threaten the performance and productivity of a team, if the conflict arises from: 1. interpersonal incompatibilities in terms of feeling tension, friction and annoyance among team members (relationship conflict, Jehn, 1995); 2. differences related to view points and opinions about the team's task being performed (task conflict, Jehn, 1995); and/or 3. controversies that arise from aspects such as how task accomplishment will proceed (process conflict, Jehn and Mannix, 2001; Brown, 1983). It is not clear what effect conflicts have on team performance. The influence of relationship conflict on team performance is mostly negative based on the studies of Jehn (1995, 1997), Shah and Jehn (1993), and de Dreu and Weingart (2002). The relationship of task conflict on team performance has mixed results. Its positive influence is supported by the studies of de Jong et al. (2008) and Souren and Sumati (2010), meanwhile the negative influence of task conflicts on team performance is supported by the studies of Jehn (1995) and Jehn and Chadwick (1997). The third type of conflict, that is process conflict, is the most recent of the three types of conflict; more studies are needed. Nevertheless, its influence over the team performance is negative, based on de Jong et al. (2008) and Gallenkamp et al. (2010).

Beyond the three types of conflicts, an important idea is that the face of every team member can be lost and/or damaged during social interaction, and online discussion team members engage in facework behaviors in order to resolve, exacerbate, or avoid the harms that conflict can bring.

6.Implications for Organizations Implementing Online Negotiations
Face is an important concept used in wide array of disciplines, and it is carried with the individual into his/her social encounters, FtF or online. Implications in the negotiation field are presented next.

Negotiation is an area where face is important, given the numbers of opportunities that a person's face can be threatened (White et al., 2004, Miles, 2010). In a negotiation, when a negotiator's face is threatened, his/her behavior can change from cooperation to competition, reducing the opportunities for an agreement and/or less cooperative agreements (White et al., 2004). Detecting that negotiations' participants are losing face tend to be elusive and highly intangible (van Ginkel, 2004) because participants maybe do not know that they are losing it or they are reluctant to admit it. Results from this study will help negotiators to detect when female negotiators may be losing face. Females relate the facework behavior *aggression* to face loss, so the more the facework behavior *aggression,* the more the females' face loss. In any negotiation, if participants are able to detect the facework behavior *aggression*, they will be able to witness the face loss of a female negotiation participant. When participants lose face, they engage in face-saving behaviors with the purpose of reestablishing their face. In consequence: 1. participants will focus their attention away from the main point of the negotiation, 2. the likelihood of impasse will increase, and 3. the chances for all-or-nothing approach to resolution will increase (Folger et al., 2009). For these reasons is important to detect or mitigate as soon as possible the effects of losing face. A possible solution could be the implementation in future online discussion/negotiation tools of a "Face Assistant" agent, which would analyze the text from the interaction of the negotiators and show a face-loss indicator. Such a tool feature would encourage negotiators to change their communication behavior towards the other negotiators. The "Face Assistant" could be part of any online negotiation platform in which parties exchange messages, such as WebNS (Yuan et al. 1998).

Not all possibilities for improvement need involve improvement in online negotiation tools, thought. Powell et al. (2004) review forty-three papers related to virtual teams based on a life cycle model. Their model includes *training* as one factor contributing to high team performance, cohesiveness, team work, high perceived decision quality, and individual satisfaction. Powell et al. (2004) suggest that it is not clear what it is necessary to perform an effective training in virtual environments at the early stages of the team building; nevertheless, they point out that any type of training benefits teams. Along with their findings, the results of this study suggest that it is important for the participants in online discussion teams to get training regarding facework behaviors, in order to let participants be aware of their possible effects on team outcomes. Moreover, Walsh et al. (2003) found that regardless of cultural heritage, the majority of the participants in an online course environment, considered important the establishment of positive face. A training session should explain to participants the concepts of face and facework, show to them examples of the different facework behaviors to help them to identify the facework behaviors, asking them the consequences for them of losing face in front of their colleges, classmates or teammates, and explaining to participants the gender differences in terms of facework behaviors preferences. In the case of an e-negotiation system, participants could be trained with the "Face Assistant," should the ENS include one. Training sessions should not be limited to negotiators; rather, mediators should be included, based on their roles concerning setting the climate for the negotiation and helping to keep the interaction to reach a positive outcome (van Ginkel, 2004).

Results of this study suggest that if females deal with conflicts in private, they will be more satisfied with the results of their work (outcome satisfaction) and they will show a higher level of cohesion (team cohesion). This result points out the need to modify the negotiation platform to support the private interactions of negotiators, aside from other team members. Meanwhile, males will be more satisfied with the result of their work if they can express their emotions. The implication of this for negotiations is that if there is a mediator or any other entity involved in the negotiation besides the negotiators, the mediator should avoid any action that could limit opportunities for males to express their emotions. If males cannot express their emotions, they will have to *pretend* that there is no conflict, which could influence negatively the males' team cohesion.

For males, the participation of a *third party* to resolve the conflict will reduce the process satisfaction. This result suggests that if there is a mediator, he/she should not participate on the conflict at the cost of the negative influence of a *third party* on the males' process satisfaction.

These results highlight the importance of a training process for negotiators, mediators, and/or facilitators in order to increase the opportunities to reach a better outcome for both negotiation parties, and to increase the chances for negotiators to participate and collaborate in another negotiation process.

7.Limitations

A limitation of this study may be that the data come from an educational setting. Given that we studied a very homogeneous group of students, our findings may not be generalizable. To the extent that online discussions in other settings have a similar nature to online discussions in university settings, the observations made here provide valuable insights concerning an area where there is presently a paucity of research.

Another possible limitation of this study concerns the set of topics that could be analyzed in an educational setting. Some topics are more controversial than others. Institutional review boards (IRB's), which vet research proposals in academia with an eye towards protecting study participants, are less likely to approve the inclusion of highly controversial (i.e., conflict-generating topics), although these may have led to an online discussion setting in which face-negotiation theory would have applied even more than it did in this study, thereby generating even more valuable data.

8-Future Research

Up to this point in time, the literature on facework behaviors has been focused on conflict situations during FtF interactions. In the Oetzel and Ting-Toomey (2003), Oetzel et al. (2000), and Oetzel et al. (2007) studies, researchers ask participants what they recall from previous conflicts. In order to generate conflict, in this study, participants were told to discuss topics, selected by researchers to lead to conflict among participants on the online discussion board. Even though levels of conflict were evident through the review of the participants' posts , future research should attempt to measure the levels of conflicts, analyze the relationship between conflicts and the outcomes of the online discussion board, and study the possible moderator effect of the facework behaviors on that relationship. In addition, a data sample different than from an educational sample would help to diversify the results attained so far.

The teams of subjects that participated in this study interacted with each other only for this assignment. Even though this was a once-in-the-semester activity, the results suggest that facework behaviors are related to the online discussion team outcomes. The next step would be the design of a study where the participants must interact with each other repeatedly. In this study, participant availability made it impossible to require more than one task assignment per semester.

One factor that influences a team's performance is the communication medium. Martinez-Moreno et al. (2008) in a study with 22 FtF teams, 22 videoconference teams (VC), and 22 computer-mediated communication (CMC) teams over a one month period found: 1. at the first stage of the teamwork, when task conflict increases, the videoconference teams performance diminishes; 2. the performance of FtF teams is positively influenced by task conflict and process conflict as well; and 3. after a period of time where the members can develop teamwork experience, relationship conflict and process conflict have a bigger negative performance impact on CMC teams than on FtF teams. From the virtual-teams literature, Davis and Khazanchi (2007) suggest that mutual knowledge can improve communication and can moderate the relationship between the virtual team's inputs, processes and outcomes (satisfaction and performance). A future study could conduct the same experiment with FtF and VC teams.

From the collocated team literature, team size also influences a team's performance. The study of Dawe (1934) suggest that a higher number of team members decreases the average number of team members' participation. Meanwhile, Thomas and Fink's (1963) study suggests that in smaller teams there are more opportunities for team members to interact with each other. Campion et al. (1996) found that the larger the team, the more ineffective it is. The next step would be the design of a study with groups with diverse number of participants.

Beyond this, it could be important to study the influence of face and the facework behaviors on the outcomes of the multi-cultural negotiators. The population of potential participants in this research could not provide samples with high levels of cultural difference, but other populations could be found.

Finally, this research provides evidence that, in conflict situations, facework behaviors can influence the outcome of online discussion teams and the influence that facework behaviors can have on negotiations. Additional research is needed to make clear what variables, in addition to conflict and gender, are involved in the apparently complex and important relationships involving face and online discussion team outcomes.

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Appendix 1 - Facework Behaviors' Survey

1. I tried to maintain my composure
2. I apologized for my behavior
3. I showed sensitivity in respecting the other person's feelings
4. I didn't argue with the other person in public
5. I tried to ask a third person to make suggestions about how to settle the dispute
6. I acted like I wasn't upset
7. I tried to be firm in my demands and didn't give in
8. I worked with the other to find a mutually acceptable solution
9. I tried to ridicule the other person
10. I listened to the other person to show respect
11. I tried to damage the other person's reputation behind his/her back
12. I gave in, in order to end the conflict
13. I proposed a middle ground for breaking the deadlock
14. I tried to persuade the other person to accept my viewpoint
15. I tried to involve a third party to discuss the problem
16. I asked for forgiveness for my actions
17. I pretended not to be hurt
18. I tried to hurt the other person indirectly
19. I tried to listen well to work on our problem
20. I tried to use "give and take" so that a compromise could be made
21. I apologized even though I didn't do anything wrong
22. I was direct in expressing my feelings
23. I tried to remain calm
24. I tried to ask a third person to help negotiate an agreement with the other person
25. I tried to ignore the conflict and behaved as if nothing happened
26. I tried to persuade the other person that my way was the best way
27. I gave in to the other person's wishes
28. I tried to keep our discussion private
29. I tried to pretend that the conflict didn't happen
30. I tried to express my feelings in a straightforward manner
31. I agreed with the other person to end the conflict
32. I tried not to discuss the problem in front of others
33. I let the other person know clearly what I was thinking